ON · · · POETRY

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ON POETRY

ON POETRY

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FOREWORD

We wrote this book because we felt that it was needed. We felt the need of a book on the nature of poetry and its forms; a book which would not be too formidably inclusive but which, without being fragmentary, would present the essentials of the art of poetry in such a manner as to make them readily understood by the student. We trust that this small volume will be found satisfactory either as a textbook in a course in poetry or as a supplementary text in any survey or special course in English literature.

We believe that in the study of poetry too much emphasis cannot be placed on the poetry itself. And so we suggest that in using this volume the student pay close attention to the illustrative material first of all, and then deduce from it the rules that govern the various forms and types of poetry. Though the practice of committing poems to memory is nowadays very much neglected, it is recommended that the student memorize certain carefully chosen examples, if for no other reason than that they will aid him in remembering the technicalities of verse form. It is true that it requires some little time and effort to memorize such a stanza as the forty-first in Book

One of *The Faerie Queene*, but what student who has once done so can ever forget all the requisites of the Spenserian stanza, the nature of onomatopoeia, the meaning of assonance and alliteration, the form of the Alexandrine, or the characteristics of iambic pentameter? Merely to learn the rhyme schemes of the principal sonnet types is almost sure to confuse the student at one time or another; but to memorize a good example of each will not only make it possible for him to give these rhyme schemes at any time; it will also serve to store his mind with some of the most beautiful poetry, with some of the most noble ideas. The good judgment and discretion of the instructor will dictate the choosing of these selections.

If the book is used as a supplementary text with an anthology of English literature, it will of course be possible to correlate the chapters with the material in the anthology. Thus the chapter on the sonnet might be studied in connection with Wyatt and Surrey, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, or Rossetti; the chapter on free verse might be read in connection with Blake; and the chapter on the French forms—or any part of it—might well be studied in connection with Swinburne. The chapter on free verse might nicely supplement a study of Walt Whitman; that on the sonnet, a study of Longfellow.

The symposium at the end of the book offers a list of definitions and comments which, because of the

many angles from which they approach poetry, should eventually lead the student to a closer and better understanding of its truly essential phases. Through the kind coöperation of many living poets we have been able to make this symposium into what we believe to be the most complete collection of significant comment on poetry yet assembled from the writings of our critics and poets.

A. S.

C. M.

Notre Dame, Indiana
April, 1931

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ON POETRY

I

ON POETRY

Poetry is a language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said. All poetry, great or small, does this. And it seems to me that poetry has two outstanding characteristics. One is that it is, after all, undefinable. The other is that it is eventually unmistakable.

—Edwin Arlington Robinson

ALL that is worth remembering in life is the poetry of it," Hazlitt wrote more than a hundred years ago, and the poetry of life is indeed just about all that we do remember. In our lifetime there are many events of importance, happenings that we cannot forget, rich memories that stay alive, that live for us because of their significance, their ulterior and larger meaning. Realities, we discover, are of very small importance after all. We are more concerned with our anticipation of what is to come and with our recalling and looking back over the past—we enjoy both prospect and retrospect. Now the poet is one who can make the past live for us; he can give us a vision of the future; and he can interpret the whole of life and show us its real meaning.

The poet interprets our own world and gives us a vision of the ideal world with such feeling, imagination, thought, and beautiful language that we call his product a poem. The poet is so interested in what he has to say, is so sincere concerning the truth of his interpretation, is so moved by the beauty and novelty of the world

> —The beauty and the wonder and the power
> The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
> Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!

—he is so overcome by his confidence and passion and vision that his ecstasy is transmitted to us through the content and the form of his expression which we call a poem. In other words, he has written not prose, but poetry—the "wandering voice" of language, that secret, mysterious thing we call poetry.

After all, though, poetry and its makers are not very difficult to understand. If, as many a critic has said, poetry defies definition—well, so do *home*, *love*, *life*, *genius*, and many another term defy definition. Yet, although a definition may help somewhat at times, and although there are many excellent definitions of poetry,[1] one soon discovers that a definition may easily become something like a cloak, which covers and hides rather than reveals. As Dr. Johnson might have said, "Poetry is poetry, and that's an end on't!"

[1]See, for instance, Chapter X.

I. POETRY, VERSE, AND PROSE

In order to clarify some matters we may observe that though the great body of our literature is classified as poetry and prose, prose is not the antithesis of poetry. *Verse*, however, the form in which most poetry is written, may be considered as opposed to prose because verse is always metrical, and prose should not be metrical.

Verse, it must be remembered, is not necessarily poetry; verse is merely the expression of thought in meter, which, in turn, is simply the regular recurrence of stress, or accent. Verse, then, is always metrical, for in the easiest and last analysis it is nothing more nor less than metrical language, language marked by regular rhythm. *Prose*, that is, plain, ordinary prose, is the expression of thought with the idea of the accurate denotation of fact. Good prose is, to a certain extent, rhythmical, but its rhythm is of a very irregular kind.

Let it be remembered from the outset that verse need not necessarily rhyme; rhyme is not an essential characteristic of it. Nor does poetry need to have rhyme. Rhyme, then, is not a requisite of either poetry or verse, but is, rather, merely an embellishment, an added ornament. Since prose is not to be metrical, and quite obviously should not employ rhyme, it is therefore not as a rule concerned with either the artifices of verse or the emotion and imagination of poetry. Verse and prose and poetry are indeed

very much as Christopher Morley describes them succinctly in the lines entitled *At the Mermaid Cafeteria.*[1]

Truth is enough for prose:
Calmly it goes
To tell just what it knows.

For verse, skill will suffice—
Delicate, nice
Casting of verbal dice.

Poetry, men attain
By subtler pain
More flagrant in the brain—

An honesty unfeigned,
A heart unchained,
A madness well restrained.

Yes, prose is concerned with truth, and poetry is in like manner concerned with truth; but in poetry it is truth "carried alive into the heart by passion." And here, to a large extent, is the whole secret: Verse becomes poetry through its passion, its sincerity, its emotional intensity—and its beauty and imagination! And prose likewise may be thought of as becoming poetry; for when prose gets to be impassioned and hence leaves its natural irregular rhythm, to become more or less regularly rhythmical, we speak of it as poetical prose. Many passages in Ruskin, DeQuincey, and Carlyle are of this character; Carlyle's *The French Revolution* is indeed sometimes spoken of as a "prose poem," though, strictly

[1]Copyright, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

speaking, this is something of a contradiction. For it is possible to have both prosaic verse and poetic verse; to have both prosaic prose and poetic prose. But the one thing the god of poetry will not sanction is prosaic poetry.

Passages of great and inspired and elevated prose may rise to the height of poetry, and they may even be poetry; but they do not therefore constitute a poem, because, for one thing, they lack the form of a poem. To make a poem it is necessary to have thought, emotion, and imaginative expression; and these three are one. In other words, we must have an idea, and passionate feeling, and form—content and form molded into one. Such a poem as Landor's *Rose Aylmer*, for instance, is an almost perfect blending of content and form, of thought and expression. The same is likewise true of Shelley's *A Lament:*

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

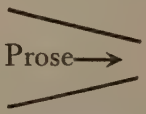
Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!

The essential difference between poetry and prose is a difference in meaning, a difference in purpose, a

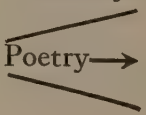
difference in suggestion. This difference is, in short, imagination, beauty, and emotional intensity. One may think of this difference in a paradoxical way: poetry says more than prose because it says nothing; prose says less than poetry because it says something. Our thought may be somewhat clearer if we put it in this manner: prose does not say as much as poetry says because prose says something—definite; poetry says a great deal more than prose because it does not say anything—definite. And since poetry says nothing in a definite way, it says everything.

Prose is, again, "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd." Poetry, on the other hand, has as its dwelling "the light of setting suns"; it is as boundless as "the round ocean and the living air; And the blue sky, and . . . the mind of man." Prose deals for the most part with facts; poetry, with symbols and suggestions. Prose tends to limit, to narrow, to define; poetry enlarges, widens, expands.

An illustration may serve to make this thought clearer still. Prose may be regarded as going like this:



But poetry goes in this way:



Thus we see that the thought going into the net of prose is caught there and retained; whereas the thought in poetry leaves the net of particular meaning and enters the great sea of feeling and imagination.

2. IMAGINATION IN POETRY

Continuing this thought, let us suppose that somebody describes the calm of an oak forest on a quiet summer night, and in his description says: "I had never before taken a walk in the woods when it was so peacefully silent. The stars were so bright and the leaves and branches so motionless that it looked as if the stars had charmed the trees; and, as there was no air stirring, I thought that everything was asleep." Now such language is quite obviously prose because the words merely describe something, tell us about something we might have seen had we been there to see it. The language tells us simply that the night was unusually quiet, and hardly tells us anything more because it tells us this one thing so very definitely.

But when we hear

> As when upon a trancéd summer-night
> Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
> Tall oaks, branch-charméd by the earnest stars,
> Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,

we may not care to hear the rest of this comparison, may not even care to wait for the completion of the

thought, for we already *feel* the stillness of the night and the motionless majesty of the trees. Such language is most certainly poetry because it is creative. Instead of telling us *about* something, instead of describing something so explicitly that we have only a very definite picture of it, the poet creates something for us, gives us a picture in such clear outline that we not only see it as he saw it but we also have pictures and visions of our own.

We may not especially care for the description of the quietness of the night and the stillness of the trees; for such descriptive language is ordinary; that is, it is prose. But we do care for the picture of these tall oaks, "green-rob'd senators of mighty woods," on a "trancéd summer-night," because the language is extraordinary, creative, magical—that is, it is poetry—and because as a consequence our thoughts are freed and allowed to wander into the illimitable reaches of our own dreams and imaginings. In other words, prose can tell us about the world, but poetry makes us feel and see and understand the world. Because of its very definiteness prose aims at an interpretation, at the meaning of the world; but poetry gives us numerous interpretations and meanings. The lines from *Hyperion*, for example, have as many meanings and as many interpretations and as many visions as there are ears to hear and eyes to see and souls to feel!

We can observe this distinction between poetry and prose even more clearly if we compare a passage

of prose with a poem written on the same subject. In her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* Dorothy Wordsworth writes:

As we descended, the scene became more fertile, our way being pleasantly varied—through coppices or open fields, and passing farmhouses, though always with an intermixture of uncultivated ground. It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly—might I be allowed to say pensively?—enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is uncommon in the more lonely parts of the Highlands to see a single person so employed. The following poem was suggested to William by a beautiful sentence in Thomas Wilkinson's *Tour in Scotland.*

This is the sentence from Wilkinson:

Passed a female who was reaping alone; who sung in Erse, as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more.

And the poem that was suggested to Wordsworth is none other than *The Solitary Reaper:*

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Detailed comment on this poem, which is so happily arranged in the four stanzas, would be endless, if not superfluous. We might say, in general, though, that almost anybody can recognize that the poem is more beautiful, more imaginative, more emotional, and more memorable than the account in prose; and it is more beautiful and more memorable

because of its emotion and imagination. The bald, straightforward account of the incident in the words of Wilkinson and of Dorothy Wordsworth is not at all noteworthy except in so far as it tells us the plain truth. No one would be in the least stirred by the prosaic facts. But the poet was so very noticeably moved by the larger significance and implications of the facts that upon reading his version of the incident we can see the solitary reaper at her work in the field almost as distinctly as if we had been present with Wordsworth and his sister. What is more, we feel the effect of her song, which the poet tells us is sweeter and more welcome than the nightingale's, and fresher and more thrilling than the cuckoo's in the spring-time. Hence, when one reads a poem well, he can say with Coleridge—

> A delight
> Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
> As I myself were there!

One of the secrets of poetry, then, is imagination. In giving us his thoughts and feelings, the poet will be imaginative, for he is so convinced of the goodness, truth, and beauty of the world that he tries to present it to us in a clearer light, to make it more vivid for us. He will do this largely through figures of speech; that is, he will associate in some way the unfamiliar with the familiar, the unknown with the known, the distant with the present, or the abstract with the concrete. The language of poetry,

then, is notably figurative because of its profound feeling. In giving us the picture or image of tall oaks in a forest Keats calls them "green-rob'd senators of mighty woods"[1]; this in order that we may visualize their strength and dignity and position in the forest. And to emphasize the charm and freshness of the woman's song Wordsworth compares it with the songs of the cuckoo and the nightingale.

3. EMOTION IN POETRY

But poetry is characterized not only by imagination, but also by emotion—perhaps, in the last analysis, entirely by emotion. "I need scarcely observe," Poe wrote, "that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement." We do not appreciate and enjoy a poem unless we do experience "this elevating excitement"; and we experience such elevating excitement because intense, personal conviction went into the creation of the poem. This is why we do not want a poet to *tell* us about an experience—the writer

[1]This is a metaphor, for the poet has called one thing something else that is similar to it but belongs to another class of objects.

Shelley, unsurpassed for his profusion of verbal images and for his sustained flights of imagination, speaks metaphorically of Emilia, in *Epipsychidion*, as "poor captive bird," moon, star, mirror, "sweet lamp," "well of sealed and secret happiness," a smile, and a lute—to name but a few of these metaphorical images. In his great ode *To a Skylark*, he very directly compares the bird to a poet, a high-born maiden, a glowworm, and a rose. All such direct comparisons with unlike objects are similes. The common figures of speech will be found illustrated in Chapter IX.

of prose can do this; but we want the poet to *give* us the experience—to make us feel that it is our own—or else create one for us. Prose can, as we have said, describe something for us, but poetry can make it live for us through emotion and imagination.

The nature of poetry is such that a great poet like Keats can, for instance, evoke a picture and feeling of cold—can make us feel it and see the visible evidences of it in such lines as

> St. Agnes' Eve—ah, bitter chill it was!
> The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
> The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
> And silent was the flock in woolly fold;
> Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told
> His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
> Like pious incense from a censer old,
> Seem'd taking flight for heaven without a death,
> Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

We can hardly tell why the sound and the meaning and the suggestiveness of words give us the feeling, but we know that we have the feeling. We have the feeling because the poet had it to begin with or else created it for us. The poet is not content to tell us that the night was extremely cold—he must make us *feel* that it was cold. No one who has ever read Wordsworth's *Michael* carefully will ever forget the majestic conclusion of the poem, where we are so notably moved by the simplicity and pathos of the line, "And never lifted up a single stone." This

single line enables us to realize how the aged man must have grieved over his wayward son. And anybody who has any capacity for pleasure at all will feel the sunburnt mirth and gaiety of such lines from Milton's *L'Allegro:*

> Sometimes, with secure delight,
> The upland hamlets will invite,
> When the merry bells ring round,
> And the jocund rebecks sound
> To many a youth and many a maid
> Dancing in the checkered shade,
> And young and old come forth to play
> On a sunshine holiday.

Poetry, then, differs very markedly from prose in that it is more concerned with the feelings and the imagination. Narrative poetry, descriptive, didactic, and satiric poetry, and in general all poetry of the realistic sort is, no doubt, very close to prose, but it differs from prose because of its imaginative, emotional treatment of the subject. Poetry that tells a story—the poetry of ballads, romances, tales, epics, and even dramas—is not so much concerned with the story as a narrative as with the implications of the story and with the feelings of those who take part in it. Although our feelings may be so aroused by a novel or a short story that we are strongly moved, even to the extent of "taking sides" with one or more characters, we are interested primarily in the plot; whereas in poetry we are more interested

in the imaginative treatment and the emotional significance of the story.

Emotion is of so much consequence in poetry that when we read lyric poetry—the most intensely personal of all poetry—we discover that it is of emotion all compact, for the poet is so beside himself in his rapture and so interested in his thought and feeling that he is scarcely at all aware of an audience. He is not now telling a story to any one, he is not doing any direct teaching, he is not interpreting character in a dramatic moment—he is merely singing from his own heart because he has to sing. If anybody cares to listen, well and good; but if nobody should care, he is satisfied with himself and with his song. Thus Shelley, who was the greatest of lyric poets, said: "A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds"; and adds in respect to those who listen: "his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why."

4. THOUGHT IN POETRY

There must, as we have observed, be worth-while thought in a poem. In the expression of his thought the poet uses for the most part the same words as are to be found in prose; but he uses them for a different purpose, or, as we should say, for an additional purpose. Ordinary prose uses words mainly for their denotation—that is, for their meaning; poetry em-

ploys words mainly for their connotation—what they imply or suggest—but for their sound and meaning as well. Good prose is clear and truthful, and so is poetry clear and truthful; but it is clear and truthful in a new sort of way. Whereas prose aims at a very definite clearness, poetry aims at every possible clarity; and whereas prose purports to tell the truth, poetry tells all the truth there is and carries it "alive into the heart by passion."

It should never be possible to mistake the meaning of prose, but it sometimes happens that one will not understand a poem. He may not understand a poem because it means too much; he may mistake its meaning simply because of its multifarious meanings.

This is true because the ordinary purpose of prose is to give us thought—clear, straightforward thought. But poetry gives us thoughts, possibly all the thoughts there are. In poetry we not only find out what the poet has been thinking, but we also discover our own thoughts and we begin thinking ourselves—enjoying all the while the thrill of discovery. The lines from Coleridge—

> . . . snow on the bare branch
> Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
> Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall,
> Heard only in the trances of the blast,
> Or if the secret ministry of frost
> Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
> Quietly shining to the quiet moon.

are a striking illustration of the use poetry makes of thought; of the magic wherewith poetry invests thought, inspires more thoughts, and still retains the original conception.

In prose it might be explained that the snow melts slowly on the roof warmed by the sun on a cold day and that the dripping water forms icicles, which hang from the eaves. This is the plain, scientific fact. Of course it may be added that the frost does its work very quietly and unobtrusively, but however poetic in its possibilities may be the work of the frost, such an explanation of its action is clearly and obviously prose. Mere science or ordinary observation has for its expression ordinary prose. But poetry is concerned with all that science is concerned with, and is ready to use all that can be gleaned from observation—poetry is interested in all this and a great deal more. All that has already been said about the action of heat and cold on snow and water is implied in the phrasing of the poet. It is *implied;* that is, "more is meant than meets the ear." The poet, making use of his observation, indicates the alternative of there being no icicles at all if the weather be sufficiently warm, or possibly of there being both icicles and eave-drops.

In poetry, therefore, we have for the most part all that we ordinarily have in prose, but we find much more that is implied. Prose is, as we have said, ordinary, whereas poetry is extraordinary. In these

few lines from *Frost at Midnight* we see something of what the poet adds to the unadorned scientific facts: the working of the frost is *secret;* the eave-drops are *hung up* in *silent* icicles; and as the moon is shining in the sky, the icicles are going to be shining *quietly* to the *quiet* moon! Who but a poet would have all this done, and who would have done it in this way? The poet has pointed out to us another region of thought and imagination, whither we may voyage and dream and speculate at our will concerning a quiet moon and silent icicles and secret ministry. He gives us a few facts but many suggestions, a "few faint clues and indirections," and lets us draw our own conclusions, so that we may have the thrill and enjoyment of our own discoveries.

5. INSPIRATION AND POETRY

In reading about poets and poetry we sometimes come across statements to the effect that in particular instances, at least, the poet is inspired, that he is possessed by something over and above him, that he is in a measure divine, or that he has a gift, or talent, or genius for poetical composition; in short, that a good poet is born, not made. But, as poets and critics have recognized for centuries, the poet must possess not only the divine gift of poetry, but also the acquired knowledge of his craft. The primary inspiration and the ecstasy of the poet arise from his looking at the world with the eyes of a child. Entranced by the pristine novelty and loveliness of something,

the poet looks at it as if he had seen it a thousand times already; he then looks at it as if he had never seen it before, and writes—what we call a poem. And if we who read or hear poetry wish to enter the realm of its beauties and delights, we must look at the world and everything in it with the simplicity and wonder of a child.

Francis Thompson, in the following brilliant passage from his great essay on Shelley, has described the childlike wonder and faith of the poet as he faces the world:

Coming to Shelley's poetry, we peep over the wild mask of revolutionary metaphysics, and we see the winsome face of the child. Perhaps none of his poems is more purely and typically Shelleian than *The Cloud*, and it is interesting to note how essentially it springs from the faculty of make-believe. The same thing is conspicuous, though less purely conspicuous, throughout his singing; it is the child's faculty of make-believe raised to the *n*th power. He is still at play, save only that his play is such as manhood stops to watch, and his playthings are those which the gods give their children. The universe is his box of toys. He dabbles his fingers in the day-fall. He is gold-dusty with tumbling amidst the stars. He makes bright mischief with the moon. The meteors nuzzle their noses in his hand. He teases into growling the kennelled thunder, and laughs at the shaking of its fiery chain. He dances in and out of the gates of heaven: its floor is littered with his broken fancies. He runs wild over the fields of ether. He chases the rolling world. He gets between the feet of the horses of the sun. He stands in the lap of patient Nature, and twines her loosened tresses after a

hundred wilful fashions, to see how she will look nicest in his song.[1]

6. WORDS AND POETRY

Just as a poet is beside himself when he is at the height of his creative mood; just as he is in a kind of ecstasy; just as he feels a new power in himself, in his thought, and in the expression of his thought—just so does a new virtue, a magic power, and a strange richness come into words when they are fused into what we call poetry.[2] The poetry is not in the individual words, in and of themselves; for if it were, poets would hardly be necessary: but the words themselves are the raw materials of poetry. Colors

[1]From *Dublin Review*, Vol. 143, pp. 36, 37.

[2]We may observe some of this inexplicable potency of words in these few lines, which, for the sake of convenience, are all taken from Shelley's *Alastor:*

In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness.

Meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought.

His scattered hair
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind.

Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky.

Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber.

are not pictures; but the painter can make works of art with colors. Sounds, notes of music, these are not music; but the composer and the musician make music out of them. Things are not poetry; an enumeration, a mere cataloguing does not make poetry, or poems. But poems can be made from these realities; from these "themes, hints, possibilities" the poet can, through imaginative interpretation, give us poetry.

The truth of the matter is what Walt Whitman sings in *A Song for Occupations*:[1]

The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroad, coasters, fishboats, canals;
The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop, yard, store, or factory,
These shows all near you by day and night—workman! whoever you are, your daily life!
In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and them far more than you estimated, (and far less also,)
In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you and me,
In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things, regardless of estimation,
In them the development good—in them all themes, hints, possibilities.

There must be, therefore, the conscious putting together of the details, of the parts; there must be the wise selection of the raw materials and then the

[1]Copyright, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

craftsmanship to manufacture the finished product we call art. Some words may indeed be thought of as latent or potential poetry, but they are not poetry, much less poems, in and of themselves. Poetry is produced, poems are made from and with words, when the poet fuses his experience, thought, vital feeling, and imagination into expression.

Some words, it is true, are more readily usable in poetry because they are already surcharged with feeling or beauty or suggestion from usage in the past. Such words as *home*, *love*, *sea*, *day*, *night*, *moon*, *live*, *sun*, *death*, *spring*, *old*, *youth*, *autumn*, *stars*, and *wine* are so rich in association that they are sometimes referred to as "poetic words," though, strictly speaking, there are no words that belong peculiarly to poetry except such words as *ere*, *whilome*, *yclept*, *wight*, and *yesteryear*. But a word like *youth*, or *autumn*, or *death*, because of its associations, so stirs us that our feelings and imagination are prepared for the thought contained in the writing that uses such words; that is, some words have a more emotional connotation than others. Consequently, we find these words of high emotional value occurring very frequently in poetry. But it must be remembered that the meaning and the implication of a word are dependent not only on the word itself, but also upon its context—the other words around it.

There are some other words, however, that please us not so much because of the feeling or the halo of

suggestion connected with the words but because of the sheer beauty of sound, or because of the quality of sound, or tone color. The poet must have an exquisite taste that will enable him to choose words both for their connotation and for their melodious or discordant qualities—that is, those words that are sonorous, mellow, or sweet, or those that are shrill, harsh, or piercing—as well as for their meaning. Such lines, for instance, as the beginning of *Kubla Khan* are great mostly because of the delicious word-music contained in them. Poetry of this sort is indeed magical and inspired.

All great poetry has that indefinable something, that elusive quality called magic. Poetry does charm and cast a spell. Such lines as the following are, like the stars, hard to account for; but we have them in the world, shedding their lustre and their charm from one generation to another. Such lines are beautiful and significant by and of themselves, but they are more beautiful and significant in their context, in their particular setting:

> Brightness falls from the air;
> Queens have died young and fair;
> Dust hath closed Helen's eye.
> —Nash, *Litany in Time of Plague*

> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.
> —*The Tempest.* I. 2

7. POETRY: ROMANTIC, CLASSICAL, AND REALISTIC

Not all poetry is so magical as these quotations, for there are three general divisions of poetry, as, in fact, of all literature: romantic, classical, and realistic. And whatever may be the characteristics of poetry in general—such as imagination, beauty, thought, emotion, loftiness, reason, and sense of fact—all these characteristics may in the last analysis be condensed into three: magic; reason, or common sense; and a sense of fact. Now all good poetry has these characteristics—in varying degrees, of course—but all good poetry will be found to be magical, reasonable, and dominated by a sense of fact.

When a sense of outward fact is the preponderant quality of poetry, the poetry is called *realistic;* when reason, or common sense, and a sense of form dominate poetry, it is called *classical;* and when magic is the outstanding characteristic, the poetry is called *romantic.* We must agree that all poetry is imaginative, but magic requires imagination in the highest degree, and as a rule, other beauty and emotion as well. In classical poetry there is imagination also, but it may be said to be in the background because reason and form are in the foreground. In realistic poetry imagination has less prominence than in classical and romantic poetry because realism is outwardly factual and more or less photographic.

There are very few poets whose work belongs exclusively to any one of these divisions. Taking

Wordsworth as an example, we find that *The Solitary Reaper* is thoroughly and intensely romantic; his *Laodamia* and *Ode to Duty* are distinctly classical; and *The Thorn* is essentially realistic. Parts of Thomson's *The Seasons* and much of the work by Crabbe are realistic. Collins's *Ode* (1746) and most of the poems of Pope are classical. Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* are overwhelmingly romantic, that is, magical.

While it may be difficult at times to draw a fine line of distinction between some kinds of poetry and ordinary verse or elevated, impassioned prose, the best poetry can invariably be recognized, for all good poetry is distinguished by its lofty thought, its sincerity, its emotional intensity, and its beautiful, imaginative expression. After all is said and written about poetry and its makers, the truth of the matter is very much as Edwin Arlington Robinson has said definitively: "Poetry has two outstanding characteristics. One is that it is, after all, undefinable. The other is that it is eventually unmistakable."

II

RHYTHM AND METER

I recall I was sitting at my desk in my room on an October night, grading English themes, fretting at the stuffiness of the room, the cramping walls, the routine of academic work. It was cool outside; there was a bit of autumn wistfulness in the wind. Suddenly I caught a faint, far cry coming down the wind —a sweet familiar music I had known on nights in the north woods. It was the honking of a flock of wild geese overhead streaming south. I listened to them as they went over. I heard the whistle of their wings and the gabbling of the ganders. I can't find words to describe what that flock of wild birds did to me. Soon they were gone. I sat a long time in an emotional turmoil. My mind went back to my boyhood in the North. I knew and loved the wild lakes and rivers from which the geese had come. Since those early years, after I had managed to get back to the woods and mountains, I had given myself every year to their wild life, to the quiet solitude of lake and hill, the starry nights, the wild freedom of the forests. It pained me to be away from it all, to be cooped up in rooms, living a prim, decorous life, away from a mode of living as wild and sweet and free as the wind. Something in the cry of those wild geese took hold of me fiercely. I pushed aside the themes and sat up through the night writing a poem with the wild geese in it, with their wild spirit, with

the rebellion and hunger that I felt. This was my first poem. I have been writing poetry steadily since that night.—LEW SARETT[1]

POEMS are almost always the result of a poet's feeling so deeply about something or perceiving so intensely some beauty about him that he must write about it. And whether it be a Lew Sarett who sees the silver of his line whip out over the clear water of a spring pond or who uncovers four newborn foxes that lie "squirming" and "nuzzling" and "whimpering" after their mother has been caught in the steel-blue jaws of a trap; or whether it be a Shelley who sits in a wood along the Arno and is animated by a tempestuous, breathing, living wind; or whether it be a Sandburg who looks at a skyscraper and thinks then of the people—thousands of them—who go in and out of that building all day and who give it a "soul of dreams and thoughts and memories" and make of it a thing alive—all this matters not. The thing that does matter, whether the resulting poem is a *Four Little Foxes*, or an *Ode to the West Wind*, or a *Skyscraper*—the thing that does matter is that in each case the poem is the result of some deep emotional experience on the part of the poet. And it is so deep and fine that he has to write about it: the beauties of the experience "well up from inside" of him until he has to let them out.

A poem, then, is written in a language which is

[1]From the *Writer*, May, 1929. Reprinted by permission.

more or less emotional. It may be polished later and rewritten and revised; but the chances are that it was first conceived in some moment of emotional intensity and that this emotion is carried over into the very language which it employs. Now, emotional language is usually rhythmical—that is, it has a certain stress or swing or flow[1] to it that comes natural to man's utterances when he is speaking under the strain of any compelling emotion. Rhythm, therefore, is one of the first requisites of a poem. For without this stress or accent or emphasis, the language of poetry would be so unemotional and so flat that the composition would probably not be a poem at all. We may define *rhythm* as the more or less regular recurrence of accent or stress within the line or within a group of lines.

If one reads any line of good poetry aloud and with as much expression as possible (and one should remember that all poetry is meant to be read aloud; that it should make its primary appeal to the ear and not to the eye) one will notice in that line this quality of rhythm, a quality which is brought about by the accents on the syllables and which gives to the line a pleasing swing or lilt. As a dozen critics have pointed out, this rhythm is a characteristic of all life. There is, for example, the ebb and flow of the tides, the regular succession of the seasons, the recurrence of day and night, the ticking of the clock, the pulse of the heart. Nature herself is rhythmical.

[1]The word *rhythm* comes from a Greek verb meaning "to flow."

As a matter of fact, even good prose usually has this quality of rhythm and the more emotional the prose is, the more impassioned it is, the more rhythmical is it likely to be. If we read aloud this beautifully descriptive passage from Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, we shall note how the more or less regular stressing of certain syllables results in the selection's having a swing or lilt such as the one we find in dancing when certain measures of the music cause us to sway or turn:

Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life; each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the gray walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. Every glade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed above it, as sheet-lightning opens in a cloud at sunset; the motionless masses of dark rock—dark though flushed with scarlet lichen, casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hollow with blue mist and fitful sound; and over all, the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that have no darkness, and only exist to illumine, were seen in fathomless intervals between the solemn and

orbed repose of the stone pines, passing to lose themselves in the last, white, blinding luster of the measureless line where the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea.

Or we can note the rhythm in this highly impassioned utterance of Job, who lifts a head that has been bowed by afflictions to call upon his God:

> But now my sorrow hath oppressed me, and all my limbs are brought to nothing.
> My wrinkles bear witness against me, and a false speaker riseth up against my face, contradicting me. (XVI: 8, 9)

In her *The American Rhythm*, Mary Austin arranges certain lines from Lincoln's famous *Gettysburg Address* to show how rhythmical Lincoln's public utterances were. Miss Austin suggests that Lincoln here falls "unconsciously into the stride of one walking a woodland path with an axe on his shoulder." Let us note the lines as she arranges them:

> It is rather for us
> Here to be dedicated to the great task
> Remaining before us;
> That from these honored dead we take
> Renewed devotion to that cause
> For which they gave the last full measure of devotion.
> That we here highly resolve
> That these dead shall not have died in vain;
> That this nation under God
> Shall have a new birth of freedom.

Rhythm, therefore, is a quality which is not only necessary in poetry but which enhances even good

prose. Now let us examine a short stanza of poetry, noting in particular the recurrence of accents that constitutes rhythm. To indicate the unaccented syllables in a line of poetry we use throughout this book the symbol ˘, and to indicate the accented syllable, we use the symbol ¯. These conventional symbols should not be referred to as *short* and *long*, for English versification does not take into consideration the time it requires to pronounce a syllable, as does the classical, but simply the quality of the stress or accent. Thus English verse is said to be *qualitative;* classical verse is said to be *quantitative*. The stanza which we quote is the second from William Blake's lyric, *Song:*

He showed me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his gardens fair
Where all his golden pleasures grow.

The accented and unaccented syllables in each line of this stanza might be represented, therefore, as follows:

˘ ¯ ˘ ¯ ˘ ¯ ˘ ¯

Now it will readily be apparent that the syllables fall naturally into a pattern: in every case the unaccented syllable is followed by an accented one. The recurrence of the accents has in this case become regular; it is possible to measure off the line into units that are identical—each unit consisting here of one

unaccented syllable followed by an accented one. Because the line can be *measured* off into regular units or identical patterns, we say that it is metrical (our word "meter" comes from the Greek word for "measure"), and we define *meter* as *regular rhythm*, or rhythm that, because of its regularity, can, as Louis Untermeyer so nicely puts it, "be reduced to a law." In other words, when we speak of a poem as possessing meter, we mean that a definite pattern has established itself in the rhythm so that it has become a law for that poem. To quote Brander Matthews: "The poet, having accustomed our ear to the rhythm he has chosen, must keep to the pattern of his choice. He must give us the succession of beats in the order he has promised them to us."

The passages quoted from Ruskin, the Book of Job, and Lincoln do not have any recognizable pattern. If one indicates the accents of their lines by using the conventional symbols, one will notice that it is impossible to distinguish any great regularity in the recurrence of the stresses. Rhythmical those selections are—so much is true; but the rhythm is not the regular, patterned rhythm known as meter. As a matter of fact, good prose should never be metrical, and when it is so to any great extent, the regularity will usually be conducive to a decided artificiality and monotony in the style. To see this illustrated we have only to note a few sentences from Blackmore's *Lorna Doone:*

In the great white desolation, distance was a mocking vision; hills looked nigh, and valleys far; when hills were far and valleys nigh; and the misty breath of frost, piercing through the ribs of rock, striking to the pith of trees, creeping to the heart of man, lay along the hollow places, like a serpent sloughing.

All the beauty of the harvest, all the gaiety was gone, and the early fall of dusk was like a weight upon me.

All her bright young wit was flashing, like a newly-awakened flame, and all her high young spirits leaping, as if dancing to its fire. And yet she never spoke a word which gave more pain than pleasure.

In reading the above one notices the regularity of the pattern, the regular recurrence of the accents, to such an extent that he forgets the meaning in the lines themselves. The pattern attracts too much attention to itself; and the regularity is not pleasing, as it is in poetry.

Let us now examine a little more closely one of the lines which we have already quoted from Blake's *Song*. The stresses of any one of them would be as given below, but to make the pattern more clear we have divided the line into its units:

˘ – | ˘ – | ˘ – | ˘ –

Each one of the above units or patterns is identical with all the rest, and in poetry is called a *foot*. The marking off of a line of poetry into its feet is called *scansion*. A foot, consisting like the ones

above, of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one, is called an *iambus*, or the foot is said to be *iambic*. Though the iambic foot is by far the most common one in English poetry (it has been estimated that about nine-tenths of our poetry employs it), there are other meters or patterns which are used. There is, for example, a foot known as a *trochee*, which consists of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one (- ⏑); a *dactyl*, which consists of an accented syllable followed by two unaccented ones (- ⏑ ⏑); an *anapest*, which is made up of two unaccented syllables followed by an accented one (⏑ ⏑ -); and a *spondee*, which consists of two accented syllables (- -). These five feet—the iambic, the trochaic, the dactylic, the anapestic, and the spondaic —are known as the primary English meters.

The iambic and the trochaic are occasionally referred to as the *duple* meters because they consist of two syllables; while the dactylic and the anapestic measures—each having three syllables—are sometimes called the *triple* meters. Likewise, the iambic and the anapestic are sometimes called the *ascending* meters because they rise from an unaccented syllable or syllables up to an accented one; and the trochaic and the dactylic are called the *descending* meters, because they descend from an accented syllable.

The following list of the more common English meters, with word examples and the symbols of each, may perhaps be useful by way of summary:

iamb	iambic	⏑ –	dĕter, prŏpōse.
trochee	trochaic	– ⏑	ūnĭt, crōwĭng.
dactyl	dactylic	– ⏑ ⏑	sēcrĕtly, pōĕtry.
anapest	anapestic	⏑ ⏑ –	ŭnĭnfōrmed, ŭnfŭlfĭlled.
spondee	spondaic	– –	sīdewālk, ĭnn-yārd.

In addition to the above, one will occasionally find certain of these classical meters substituted for single feet in a line: pyrrhic (⏑ ⏑), amphibrach (⏑ – ⏑), amphimacer (– ⏑ –), paeon (– ⏑ ⏑ ⏑), choriamb (– ⏑ ⏑ –), tribrach (⏑ ⏑ ⏑).

So much for the *kinds* of feet. But to designate completely the meter of any poem, we must also indicate the *number* of feet in a line. If we but remember that the word "meter" is taken from a Greek word meaning "measure" (and hence in poetry "foot"), and if we but prefix the words from the Greek which indicate the number of those feet, we shall have no difficulty in arriving at the terms which indicate the number of feet to a line. Thus a line of poetry which has but one foot is known as a *monometer;* one with two feet, a *dimeter;* one with three feet, *trimeter;* four feet, *tetrameter;* five feet, *pentameter;* six feet, *hexameter;* seven feet, *heptameter;* eight feet, *octometer;* and nine feet, *nonameter.* Lines of one foot and of nine feet are extremely rare.

In order to make clear what is meant by these meters we give illustrations of some of them from

actual poems. Most of our examples are iambic because it is the meter most often encountered.

1. *Iambic monometer—*

Thus I
Pass by
And die;
As one
Unknown
And gone.

—Herrick, *Upon His Departure Hence*

2. *Iambic dimeter—*

But still the corn
At dawn of morn

. . .

At eve lies waste,
A trampled paste.

—Scott, "Song" from *The Dance of Death*

3. *Iambic trimeter—*

The man whose silent days
In harmless joys are spent,
Whom hopes cannot delude,
Nor sorrow discontent;

That man needs neither towers
Nor armor for defense,
Nor secret vaults to fly
From thunder's violence.

—Campion, *The Man of Life Upright*

4. *Iambic tetrameter*—

My wealth is health and perfect ease;
My conscience clear my chief defense.
—DYER, *My Mind To Me a Kingdom Is*

5. *Iambic pentameter*—

The hungry Judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jurymen may dine.
—POPE, *The Rape of the Lock*

6. *Iambic hexameter*—

The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.
—SHELLEY, *To a Skylark*

He strowd an *Ave-Mary* after and before.
—SPENSER, *Faerie Queene.* I, i, 35

7. *Iambic heptameter*—

Thus sent he his long javelin forth. It struck his foe's huge shield. . . .
—CHAPMAN, *The Iliad*

8. *Trochaic monometer*—

Humming,
Thrumming,
Groaning,
Toning,
Squeaking.
—CHATTERTON, *The Revenge*

9. *Trochaic tetrameter—*

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them.
—Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*

10. *Trochaic pentameter—*

This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
—Browning, *One Word More*

11. *Anapestic dimeter—*

Of the form of thy birth,
Of the mould of thy clay,
Which return'd to the earth,
Re-appear to the day!
—Byron, *Manfred*

12. *Anapestic trimeter—*

Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave, . . .
—Byron, *To Augusta*

13. *Anapestic tetrameter—*

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.
—Byron, *The Destruction of Sennacherib*

14. *Anapestic pentameter—*

Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
—Browning, *Saul*, IX

15. *Dactylic dimeter—*

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly . . .
—Hood, *The Bridge of Sighs*

16. *Dactylic tetrameter—*

Wild-visaged Wanderer! God help thee, wretched one!
—Southey, *The Soldier's Wife*

We wish at this point to call attention to two of the iambic meters illustrated above—the pentameter and the hexameter. (A poem written in unrhymed *iambic pentameter* lines is said to be written in *blank verse*.) Introduced from Italy during the sixteenth century by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, the form was widely used by the contemporaries of Shakespeare, and in the hands of a master like Shakespeare himself it acquired a dignity and a fluency which no other writer of blank verse has ever been able to attain. Christopher Marlowe employed it almost entirely, and the reader who would see the resonance and power of the form can do no better than turn to *Dr. Faustus* or *Tamburlaine*. After the age of Shakespeare, however, blank verse lost its popularity until we find Milton in the seventeenth century decrying the use, during his own day, of rhyme,

because he thought it to be "no necessary adjunct or true ornament of a poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age to set off wretched matter and lame meter." Milton himself used blank verse in all of his major poems. To note the majesty and flow of the form, let us see his description of Pandemonium:

Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet—
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven;
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equaled in all their glories, to enshrine
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury. The ascending pile
Stood fixed her stately highth; and straight the doors,
Opening their brazen folds, discover, wide
Within, her ample spaces o'er the smooth
And level pavement: from the archéd roof,
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With naphtha and asphaltus, yielded light
As from a sky.

Particularly suited to the monologue and to longer descriptive, philosophical, and narrative poems where a steady progression is required in the move-

ment and where the thought would be fettered if rhyme were used—blank verse is one of the most common forms of English poetry.

An iambic hexameter line is often referred to as an *Alexandrine* because it first appeared in a thirteenth century French poem on Alexander. Spenser used the Alexandrine with great effectiveness: at the end of the Spenserian stanza it has the effect of rounding out, and lending a dignity and completeness to, the thought of the previous shorter lines. Michael Drayton's use of it antedates even that of Spenser's; but, with the exception of its use as the last line of the Spenserian stanza, it has never enjoyed much popularity with English poets.

The rhythm of poetry is often balanced by a pause —a pause which the sense demands—somewhere within the line or at the end of it. This pause is called a *cesura* (sometimes spelled *caesura*). The cesura may occur at a point of punctuation, as in the following:

> And often knockt his brest, || as one that did repent.
> —SPENSER, *Faerie Queene*. I. i. 29

Or, regardless of the punctuation mark, it may simply coincide with the break in the sense:

> At night doth baite his steedes || the Ocean waves emong.
> —SPENSER, *Faerie Queene*. I. i. 32

In the Alexandrine the cesura usually occurs at the end of the third foot, but it may occur elsewhere as, for instance, in the following pentameter line:

My daughter! || with thy name || this song begun,
—Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. III. cxv.

In determining the meter of a poem it is well to remember that our decision will depend upon the meter which *prevails* throughout that poem. We are quite likely to be misled by taking any one line, or, sometimes, even any few lines of the composition; for the skilful poet varies his meters to such an extent that we often find not only substitutions of one foot for another within the line, but even whole stanzas that are irregular. Thus the movement of the following stanza is only predominantly anapestic, but we would designate the meter by this prevailing foot:

> And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
> Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;
> And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
> Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.
> —Shelley, *The Sensitive Plant*

In the stanza quoted below from Herrick's *An Ode for Ben Jonson* we have an iambic monometer line, two iambic dimeters, four iambic trimeters, an iambic tetrameter, and even an iambic pentameter! Clearly, the only possible way in which we could designate

the meter of this stanza would be to say that it is iambic with lines of varying length:

Ah, Ben!
Say how or when
Shall we, thy guests,
Meet at those lyric feasts,
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun;
Where we such clusters had,
As made us nobly wild, not mad?
And yet each verse of thine
Out-did the meat, out-did the frolic wine.

It often happens, furthermore, that lines of poetry are written with the final foot incomplete. Such a line is said to be *catalectic*. When the final foot is complete the meter is said to be *acatalectic*. (The term *hypercatalectic* is used to designate an iambic or an anapestic line that has an added syllable.) Both the catalectic and the acatalectic meters are happily illustrated in these few lines from Keats's *Lines On The Mermaid Tavern:*

Souls of poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

Here each of the first two lines (catalectic) would be scanned

and each of the second two lines (acatalectic)

$$- \breve{} \mid - \breve{} \mid - \breve{} \mid - \breve{}$$

so that, strictly speaking, the meter of the first two would be said to be trochaic tetrameter catalectic, and the meter of the second two, trochaic tetrameter acatalectic. It will readily be seen, however, why it is unnecessary to specify *acatalectic* in designating the meter of the second two lines.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his *Metrical Feet: Lessons for a Boy*, admirably sums up the functions and particular natures of each of the five primary English measures:

Trochee trips from long to short;
From long to long in solemn sort
Slow spondee stalks; strong foot! yea ill able
Ever to come up with Dactyl trisyllable.
Iambics march from short to long;—
With a leap and a bound the swift Anapaests throng.

He who would fully appreciate poetry will therefore always attempt to realize how the meter of a poem is the inevitable one for that particular poem. He will come to see how it was that Tennyson used the tripping trochaic measure in *The Lady of Shalott*—how naturally the meter itself seems to suggest the light and rapid flow of the river "Flowing down to Camelot." He will come to see why Tennyson used the long and stately and dignified nonameter

line in the poem, *To Virgil*, which he wrote for the nineteenth centenary of Virgil's death. He will understand why the same poet had the courageous and determined Galahad speak in the forceful and marching iambic measure. He will, in brief, realize that by understanding the intricacies of the metrics of a poem he will be better able to appreciate the poem itself.

For the poet does not use a certain meter arbitrarily. In each case he chooses the particular one that best aids him in the expression of his idea. Each one of the meters is particularly adapted to certain ideas or certain moods, and the poet casts his thought into the one which in each case it demands. He may do this unconsciously, but do it he will. And the greatest poems are those in which there is a perfect blending of a very great and noble and compelling idea with that form which is exactly suited to it. But in any case, as Ridgely Torrence says, "If the flower is a flower at all, it will unfold unerringly into its inevitable form."

III

RHYME

For rhyme the rudder is of verses,
With which, like ships, they steer their courses.
—BUTLER, *Hudibras*

HAVING considered rhythm and meter and the part they play in poetry, we may now take up rhyme and its significance. We have learned already that rhyme is not a requisite of poetry; for some of the best poetry in the world has been written without the use of what we know as rhyme. Observe these lines from Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound:*

Thro' yon peaks of cloudlike snow
The roseate sunlight quivers: hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn?
I feel, I see
Those eyes which burn thro' smiles that fade in tears,
Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.

No one is going to deny that this is poetry, and yet there is no rhyme here! Similarly, when we read such lines as these from *Paradise Lost*, we recognize the poetry:

Now came still evening on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Now with these lines compare the first stanza of Poe's *To Helen:*

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

and the first stanza of Whittier's *Proem:*[1]

I love the old melodious lays
Which softly melt the ages through,
The songs of Spenser's golden days,
Arcadian Sidney's silvery phrase,
Sprinkling our noon of time with freshest morning dew.

We see, therefore, that though rhyme is not a requisite of poetry, it does, however, serve as a structural link; it helps to please the ear; and it aids the

[1]Used by permission of, and special arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company.

memory. It is an added ornament to the already existent beauties of poetry. As, for instance, when we see a woman in an ensemble suit or a man in a golf sweater and hose to match, we are attracted somewhat more in the observation of the dress; but the distinctiveness of the clothes in color or style must not be such as to draw the attention exclusively or even chiefly to the colors or matched garments. Many persons, most people, as a matter of fact, are well dressed without the ensemble suits or the thoroughly matched garments. To be well dressed, one must wear clothes that fit and are fitting; one must not attract inordinately or inappropriately. Rhyme, likewise, must not attract unusual attention to itself; to be perfect, it should be so easy and natural as not to attract any attention beyond the mere melody and recurrence.

I. COMMON RHYME

But what, first of all, *is* rhyme? It is the identity of vowel sound in the final accented syllables of words, and in all the sounds that follow, but with different consonant sounds (or a consonant in one instance and none in the other) preceding these rhyming syllables. This is what is known as common, or end-rhyme.

Taking first the stanza from Poe as an illustration, we see that *me* of the first line rhymes with *sea* of the third line; and that the second, fourth, and fifth lines rhyme. For the sake of convenience, therefore, we

say that the rhyme scheme of the stanza is *ababb*. *Yore* and *bore*, and *shore* are perfect rhymes because there is the long *o* sound in each word; this vowel sound is followed by the same consonant sound—*r* in this instance; and the *ore* sound is preceded by different consonant sounds.

Rhyme is not, of course, concerned merely with words of one syllable. Rhyming words may be dissyllables or polysyllables, though such rhymes are less frequent than those made up of monosyllables. *Star* and *far*, and *go* and *low* are rhymes; but so are *leaping* and *creeping*, *pleasure* and *measure*, and *slenderly* and *tenderly*, *dutiful* and *beautiful*. (Rhymes of one syllable are called single, or *masculine*;) rhymes of two or more syllables are known as *feminine* rhymes. Feminine rhyme may be subdivided into double and triple rhymes: double, if of two syllables; triple, if of three syllables.

The requirements of masculine, or single, rhyme are these:

1. The vowel sounds of the rhyming syllables and the succeeding consonant sounds must be identical;
2. The preceding consonant sounds must be different, or there must be a consonant in one case and none in the other; and
3. The vowel sounds must be accented.

Afar and *mar*, then, are perfect rhymes. *Way* and *weigh* and *away* are not perfect because the

initial consonant sounds are the same, not different. Such rhymes, if they may be called rhymes at all, are known as identical rhymes, which were admissible in the time of Chaucer, but are no longer so. Thus also, *noon* and *tune* are not perfect single rhymes because the vowel sounds are not the same. Such words as *noon* and *tune;* and *heaven*, *given*, and *even* are known as *imperfect* rhymes.

Feminine rhyme also has as its requisites:

1. The rhyming syllable (accented) must be,
   a. in double rhyme, the penult (the next to the last syllable), and
   b. in triple rhyme, the antepenult (the third syllable from the end);
2. The rhyming syllable must follow the rules given for single rhyme; and
3. All the syllables following the rhyming syllable must be identical in sound.

Shelley's *To a Skylark* and Scott's "Coronach" (from *The Lady of the Lake*) furnish us with numerous instances of double rhyme. In these lines from Scott—

> The autumn winds rushing
> Waft the leaves that are searest,
> But our flower was in flushing
> When blighting was nearest.

we see that *rushing* and *flushing*, and *searest* and *nearest* are perfect double rhymes: they satisfy all the requirements of feminine rhyme.

Triple rhyme is not used very extensively in English poetry, although it lends itself readily to satirical or humorous verse. Thomas Hood, however, wrote a well-known serious poem, *The Bridge of Sighs*, in which he uses many triple rhymes. The first stanza is a good illustration.

One more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!
Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Once again we have perfect rhymes, faultless triple rhymes, such as *slenderly* and *tenderly*, which satisfy the requirements of feminine rhyme. Near the middle of this poem by Hood we find in three consecutive lines the words *evidence*, *eminence*, and *providence*, which, it is almost needless to say, are not faultless; there is lacking an identity of vowel sound in the accented syllables.

Along with the study of rhyme we should consider alliteration, assonance, and consonance—all of which may be regarded as variations of rhyme. Onomatopoeia also will deserve our attention. It should be remembered that the earliest English poetry did not employ rhyme at all; that common rhyme did not

come into general usage until about the time of Chaucer. This early English poetry had, however, a very able substitute in alliteration.

2. ALLITERATION

Alliteration, a very common melodic device in poetry, is the repetition of identical consonant sounds at the beginning of successive or nearly successive words. Hence it is sometimes called *initial* rhyme; though, when the repetition of identical consonant sounds comes within the words, we have what is known as *internal alliteration*—just as we occasionally find a poem which makes use of *internal rhyme*, that is, rhyme within the line. Like common rhyme, alliteration must be unobtrusive; it must not attract undue attention to itself. This "initial rhyme" exists, not for itself, but for the poetry.

One of the finest examples of both alliteration and internal rhyme in one stanza is to be found in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner:*

> The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
> The furrow followed free;
> We were the first that ever burst
> Into that silent sea.

How easily, in our reading, the "furrow follows free"! How could we describe it better? And after we have gone over the words several times, "silent sea" becomes almost inevitable in this final line of the quatrain. *Blew* and *flew*, and *first* and *burst*, further-

more, are thoroughly clear illustrations of what is meant by internal rhyme. One can hardly help noting, it may be remarked further, the beautiful use that Shelley makes of internal rhyme in his poem, *The Cloud.* "After life's fitful fever," from *Macbeth*, illustrates perfectly both ordinary and internal alliteration, in combination.

Anglo-Saxon poetry made use of alliteration as a structural, technical requirement, as, for instance, in *Beowulf;* and in as late a time as the age of Chaucer we find the Middle English poem *Piers The Plowman* strongly alliterative. These four lines will illustrate:

> In a somer seson whan soft was the sonne,
> I shope me in shroudes as I a shepe were,
> In habite as an heremite unholy of workes,
> Went wyde in this world wondres to here.

But its usage nowadays is confined to the ornamental sound effects to be derived from it. In the fourth stanza of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Keats has revealed what delightful sound may come from the internal alliteration with the letter *d:*

> That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
> And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
> From hurry to and fro.

And in the first line of Collins's *Ode to Evening*, which Herbert Read[1] calls "the most amazing as it is cer-

[1] In *Phases of English Poetry*, pp. 93, 94.

tainly the most beautiful poem of the eighteenth century," we see what extraordinary effects may be had from the consonants themselves:

If aught of oaten stop, or pastoral song.

If we write out the consonant sounds, as John Livingston Lowes[1] has done, we find them appearing in this remarkable order:

f t f t (n) st p r p st r (l s ng).

Collins had such a delicate ear for both vowel and consonant effects that we are scarcely aware of the fact that this poem is not rhymed! Tennyson, likewise, in the lyric, "Tears, Idle Tears," from *The Princess*, showed what can be done with careful arrangement of vowel and consonant sounds; and this song is also unrhymed, although there is a refrain as an added artistic effect.

How alliteration may obtrude itself and become so noticeable as to detract from the beauty and ease of poetry is easily brought out by some lines of Swinburne's work,[2] in which the alliteration is overdone, and the ear is offended by the very surfeit of technical excellence. Although he is happy in the opening lines of the second chorus in *Atalanta in Calydon*—

Before the beginning of years
There came to the making of man—

[1] *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, p. 244. Houghton Mifflin, 1919.

[2] These three selections from Swinburne are used with the permission of Messrs. Harper and Brothers.

he has in the fifth stanza of the first chorus the lines—

> The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
> Ripe grasses trammel a traveling foot,
> The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
> From leaf to flower and flower to fruit.

Swinburne doubtless realized that he was allowing himself too many liberties in this practice, for he parodied (in *Nephelidia*) this excessive alliteration with still more alliteration in such lines as—

> Surely no spirit or sense of a soul that was soft to the spirit and soul of our senses
> Sweetens the stress of surprising suspicion that sobs in the semblance and sound of a sigh;
> Only this oracle opens Olympian, in mystical moods and triangular tenses,—
> "Life is the lust of a lamp for the light that is dark till the dawn of the day when we die."

Unnecessary, therefore, is any explanation of the fact, as Sidney Lanier observes in *The Science of English Verse*, that "all alliteration for the sake of alliteration is trifling."

3. ASSONANCE

Assonance in poetry is the repetition of the same accented vowel sound in closely related words for the sake of enhancing the melody. It may be regarded as approximate rhyme; but it differs from common

rhyme in that there is always a change of consonant sound after the assonant vowels, and that it may occur anywhere within the line, not necessarily in the middle or at the end. Thus, *hope* and *mold*, *grant* and *lance* are examples of assonance. If we are to have perfect assonance in words of more than one syllable, we must see to it that the vowels of the syllables that follow the accented syllables be in agreement of sound, as well as the vowels of the accented syllables. *Granted* and *lanced*, *penitent* and *merited*, fulfill this requirement.

Such was assonance in its stricter usage, as when it was a structural device in early French and Spanish poetry (it is still sometimes used thus in Spanish poetry) and as it was used by George Eliot in *The Spanish Gypsy:*

> M*ai*den, crowned with glossy bl*a*ckness,
> Lithe as p*an*ther, forest-ro*a*ming,
> Long-armed n*ai*ad, when she d*an*ces,
> On a str*e*am of *e*ther flo*a*ting—
> Bright O bright Fed*al*ma!

But we do not as a rule employ assonance according to this strict usage, for we have end-rhyme to take its place. And even within the line we see George Eliot regarding *Maiden* and *naiad* as assonant. Since there is end-rhyme to take the place of assonance as a structural device, assonant words are to be found mostly within the line. The long *e* sound, with

its consequent languorous effect, is, for instance, very noticeable in this stanza from Tennyson's *The Lotos-Eaters*.[1] Note also the frequency of the long *o* sound.

> They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
> Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
> And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
> Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
> Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
> Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
> Then some one said, "We will return no more";
> And all at once they sang, "Our island home
> Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

Reading the above stanza, and keeping in mind the refrain in Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears," and then recalling Poe's *The Raven*, we come to agree with Poe's dictum (in *The Philosophy of Composition*) that the long *o* is "the most sonorous vowel, in connection with *r* as the most producible consonant." These two lines from Wordsworth's great ode are another illustration of this effect:

> And see the Children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

To see how effective the *r* sound may be, it will be worth while to read aloud this stanza from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (I. 3. 33):

[1]From Tennyson's *The Death of Œnone and Other Poems*. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

They had not ridden farre, when they might see
One pricking towards them with hastie heat,
Full strongly armd, and on a courser free,
That through his fiercenesse foméd all with sweat,
And the sharpe yron did for anger eat,
When his hot ryder spurd his chauffed side;
His look was sterne, and seeméd still to threat
Cruell revenge, which he in hart did hyde,
And on his shield *Sans loy* in bloudie lines was dyde.

This suiting the sound to the sense will be observed further under onomatopoeia.

4. CONSONANCE

Although many critics regard assonance as merely resemblance of sound, it is doubtless better to consider assonance as the *identity* of vowel sound—always with a change of consonant sound after the vowels, thereby distinguishing it from common rhyme—and then treat *resemblance* of vowel sound under the head of *consonance*. Such words as *feign* and *scent*, *well* and *wilt*, may therefore be regarded as consonant.

To make the relation of assonance and consonance a little more clear, we might look at the matter in this way: If the vowel sounds of two different words are *identical*, they must certainly *resemble* each other; though words which resemble each other do not necessarily have to be identical. Thus, all assonant words are consonant words, but we have many consonant words which are not assonant ones. (The words *hope* and *mold*, which we have given above, will clearly be

seen as consonant as well as assonant; and, on the other hand, *feign* and *scent* are just as clearly consonant but not assonant.) Assonance, because it is an approximation of rhyme, offers that pleasurable effect of "sameness with difference" which the poet cannot achieve by rhyme; consonance, because it differs still more from rhyme, enables the poet to achieve even a subtler effect.

5. ONOMATOPOEIA

As Pope writes in the *Essay on Criticism*—

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offense,
The sound must seem an echo to the sense:
Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar:
When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line too labors, and the words move slow;
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main.

Here we have a good illustration of what *onomatopoeia* does and should do: "The sound must seem an echo of the sense"; both sound and movement must be fitting. This oldest and most direct figure of speech is from the Greek and means "name-making"—the words make their own meaning; not completely echoic, they are, however, symbolical of the actual sound.

There is a large number of onomatopoetic words in the English language, such as *bang*, *crunch*, *hiss*, *murmur*, *buzz*, *crack*, *sputter*, *whirr*, *hush*, and *rumble*. An onomatopoetic word, then, is a word that defines itself; the sound fits the meaning.

We append a number of great instances of the use of onomatopoeia in English poetry:

And more, to lulle him in his slumber soft,
A trickling streame from high rocke tumbling downe
And ever-drizling raine upon the loft,
Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne
Of swarming Bees, did cast him in a swowne:
No other noyse, nor peoples troublous cryes,
As still are wont t'annoy the walléd towne,
Might there be heard: but carelesse Quiet lyes,
Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enemyes.
—SPENSER, *The Faerie Queene*. I. 1. 41

Ere to black Hecate's summons
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note. —*Macbeth*. III. 2

Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw.
—MILTON, *Lycidas*

To bellow through the vast and boundless Deep.
—MILTON, *Paradise Lost*. I. 177

On a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder. —*Ibid*. II. 879–882

A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match.
—BROWNING, *Meeting at Night*

Moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.
—TENNYSON, *The Princess*[1]

'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'
—TENNYSON, *Morte d'Arthur*[1]

Either when reading poetry or hearing it read, the student should be able to recognize rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia; and he should of course be able to give clear definitions of these terms as well. To make clear the distinctions between common rhyme and assonance and consonance we add by way of summary the following illustrations:

COMMON RHYME	ASSONANCE	CONSONANCE
told, bold	home, tone	some, gone
late, wait	game, gate	rain, lend
abet, regret	indent, reset	behest, wisp
rumble, mumble	thunder, crunching	wonder, window
frigidly, rigidly	withering, slippery	yellowing, willowy

[1]From Tennyson's *The Death of Œnone and Other Poems.* By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

IV

TYPES OF POETRY

Trick'd in antique ruff and bonnet,
Ode, and elegy, and sonnet.
—JOHNSON, *Parody of the Style of Thomas Warton*

These [poets] be subdivided into sundry more special denominations. The most notable be the heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral, and certain others, some of these being termed according to the matter they deal with, some by the sort of verse they liked best to write in.
—SIDNEY, *The Defense of Poesy*

ENGLISH poetry may be divided into the three principal classifications of narrative, lyric, and dramatic, with a fourth smaller class composed of such minor forms as descriptive, didactic, and satiric, together with light verse. Though these classifications are for the most part separate and distinct in themselves, there are no hard and fast boundaries, for there are many poems that by their method of treatment may be both narrative and lyric (some ballads, for instance, which are sometimes dramatic as well); narrative and dramatic (drama and dramatic monologue); lyric and dramatic (dramatic monologue); or narrative and satiric (like

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*). Recognizing this blending or overlapping of types, we shall try to give examples which illustrate as clearly as possible the special types of the larger classifications.

Narrative Poetry

I. THE BALLAD

A *ballad* is, very simply, a legendary story told in verse. The *popular ballads*—sometimes called *folk-ballads*, because they are the poetry of the common people—are unique in that we do not know who wrote them; it is rather generally believed, however, that they are communal in origin. Impersonal and objective, they were not originally read, but recited, and were preserved by word of mouth, with the result that we frequently have several renditions of the same story. It was not until a later time that they were written down and preserved in the form, or forms, in which we know them. The form is usually that of the ballad measure. The flourishing period of the popular ballads was the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Some of the best of the old ballads are: *Sir Patrick Spens; The Hunting of the Cheviot* (sometimes entitled *Chevy Chase*); *Thomas Rymer; Edward; The Twa Sisters; Robin Hood and Allen-a-Dale; Robin Hood's Death and Burial;* and *Get Up and Bar the Door.*

The *literary*, or *imitation*, *ballad* differs from the

folk type in that it is of more recent origin and is written by an individual; it is also more finished in thought and expression and structure.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, by Coleridge; *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, by Keats; *Lucy Gray*, by Wordsworth; *Jock o' Hazeldean* and *Lochinvar*, by Scott; *The Diverting History of John Gilpin*, by Cowper; *Sister Helen*, by Rossetti; and *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, by Longfellow—all are literary ballads.

2. THE METRICAL ROMANCE

The *metrical romance*, a product of the Middle Ages, is a long, drawn-out love story told in verse. It differs from the ballad in that it is longer and more complex in form; its subjects are love and adventure; and its characters are always high born.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; Spenser's *The Faerie Queene;* and Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* (even if Chaucer did call it a tale!) are good examples of the earlier metrical romance. Later examples include such poems as Coleridge's *Christabel*, which is in fragmentary form; Keats's *The Eve of St. Agnes;* Scott's *The Lady of the Lake;* and Byron's *The Bride of Abydos*.

3. THE METRICAL TALE

The *metrical tale* is, as a rule, simpler, shorter, and less fanciful than the romance, and instead of being concerned with persons of a special class, it treats of

the ordinary affairs of ordinary people. The tale is unlike the ballad in that it has less vigor and dramatic intensity than the ballad, and is told in any of a number of metrical forms.

Types of the tale in verse are Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales;* Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (in each of these groups the tales are bound together so as to make them appear a unit, albeit each tale is complete in itself); Burns's *Tam O' Shanter;* Longfellow's *Evangeline* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish;* Tennyson's *Enoch Arden;* and Noyes's *The Highwayman.*

4. THE EPIC

An *epic* is a long narrative poem that recounts the deeds of heroic personages. The writer of an epic places himself in the background, but he sometimes speaks in his own person.

Beowulf, like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, is an epic of the old, heroic type. It is impersonal and was meant to be sung or recited.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, like Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, are personal, literary epics, which are the work of a single author, who often reveals his personality in the course of the story.

Pope in *The Rape of the Lock* wrote what is known as a *mock-heroic* poem, a *mock-epic*, in which he used all the elaborate machinery of a great epic merely to satirize the trifles of an artificial society.

Don Juan, by Byron, may be classed as a playful,

humorous epic, in which the poet discloses himself and his thoughts on man and the world.

The literary epic, the mock-heroic, and the humorous epic are all meant to be read instead of sung or recited. They represent later growths in the development of epic art.

Lyric Poetry

A *lyric* is a poem that presents some strong, subjective emotion. Essentially meditative, the lyric reveals the author in the foreground, always speaking in his own person. It is the most personal of the types of poetry. The principal kinds of lyrics are the song, the pure or simple lyric, the elegy, the sonnet, and the ode.

I. THE SONG

The *song* is a short lyric poem that is intended primarily to be sung. Although many lyrics are singable, and most lyrics are melodious, the song, in particular, must be written in a form that will readily lend itself to the qualities of the human voice for singing.

Scattered through the plays of Shakespeare are some of the finest songs we have in English, many of which have been set to music and are frequently heard sung; e.g., "Who Is Sylvia?" from *Two Gentlemen of Verona;* "Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind" and "Under the Greenwood Tree," from *As You Like It;* and "Hark, Hark! the Lark," from *Cymbeline*.

A few other famous songs from English literature are *Auld Lang Syne*, *Sweet Afton*, and *Comin' thro' the Rye*, by Burns; *The Last Rose of Summer* and *Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms*, by Thomas Moore; *Sweet and Low*, in *The Princess*, by Tennyson; *To Celia*, by Ben Jonson; *Home, Sweet Home*, by John Howard Payne; *Old Folks at Home* and *My Old Kentucky Home*, by Stephen Foster.

All the songs listed above are what are known as *secular* songs. There are, however, many songs which are classified as *sacred songs*, or *hymns*. Among the best-known are *Lead, Kindly Light*, by Cardinal Newman; *O for a Closer Walk with God*, by Cowper; *Nearer, My God, to Thee*, by Sarah Adams; and *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*, by Charles Wesley.

2. THE SONNET

The sonnet is the most personal form of lyric poetry. It is also the most definite, fixed form of the lyric, and because of its importance as a type, a special chapter (see Chapter VI) has been devoted to it.

A list of the greatest sonnet writers in the language would include the names of Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Rossetti, Longfellow, John Masefield, and Edwin Arlington Robinson. Among the famous sonnet sequences are Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella;* Spenser's *Amoretti;* Shakespeare's *Sonnets;* Michael Drayton's *Idea;* Samuel

Daniel's *Delia;* Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese;* Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The House of Life;* and Robert Bridges' *The Growth of Love.*

3. THE ELEGY

The *elegy* is a poem of grief; it may be a reflection on death in general or it may express sorrow for personal or public loss.

The greatest English elegies are Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (it is a glorification of the obscure persons who lie in Stoke Poges cemetery, and is therefore informed by general reflections on death); Milton's *Lycidas* (for Edward King); Shelley's *Adonais* (for John Keats); Arnold's *Thyrsis* (for Arthur Hugh Clough); and Tennyson's *In Memoriam,* which may be thought of as a series of elegiac poems, "short swallow-flights of song" (for Arthur Henry Hallam).

Some other elegies, and some poems which are elegiac in tone, are Whitman's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* and *O Captain! My Captain!* Emerson's *Threnody;* Wordsworth's five "Lucy Poems"; Poe's *Annabel Lee;* Browning's *Prospice;* Bryant's *Thanatopsis;* Shelley's *A Lament;* and William Watson's *Lachrymae Musarum.*

4. THE ODE

Just as the sonnet is the most personal form of lyric poetry, so is the *ode* its loftiest form. The

ode deals progressively with some exalted theme and in most cases varies the meter in accordance with the meaning. It is written to commemorate some great event, to praise some distinguished personage, or to express enthusiastic or dignified feeling.

The *regular* ode in English follows to a certain extent the arrangement of the ancient Greek ode, with its strophe, antistrophe, and epode. The *strophe* ("turn") was the part sung in the Greek choral dance in moving from the right to the left of the altar; the *antistrophe* ("counterturn"), exactly similar in form to the strophe, was the "answer," or return, of the chorus; and the *epode* ("stand"), the part sung while the chorus stood still. The Greek poet Pindar was responsible for this strict type, which is represented in English by such poems as Ben Jonson's *Ode to Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison;* and Gray's *The Bard* and *The Progress of Poetry.*

Through some mistaken notion in regard to the odes of Pindar, Abraham Cowley, writing in the seventeenth century, thought that Pindar's work was quite irregular, and hence wrote what is generally known as the *Cowleyan* ode in English, an ode that is not regular at all. Cowley has had, of course, many followers. Strictly speaking, this type of ode should be classified as the *irregular* ode. Of this type Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* is undoubtedly the best in our language. Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* and *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day;* Lowell's *Harvard Commemoration Ode;*

Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* (which is also elegiac); and Moody's *Ode in Time of Hesitation* are all irregular in form.

A third class of odes is made up of those written in regular stanzaic pattern, but with no regard to the Greek type; such odes may therefore be called "*stanzaic.*" Some well-known odes in this classification are Milton's *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity;* Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, *To Autumn*, and *Ode on a Grecian Urn;* Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* and *To a Skylark;* Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty;* Coleridge's *Ode to France;* and Collins's *Ode to Evening* and *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands.*

5. THE PURE OR SIMPLE LYRIC

Under the heading of the *pure* or *simple lyric* it is customary to group all the lyric poems that do not come under any other classification. As a consequence, there are doubtless more poems of this type than of any other type in the language. The simple lyric is for the most part brief, so short that it can always be read at one sitting. Lyric intensity cannot be kept at its greatest for a very long time, lest the ecstasy bring weariness, and the weariness bring pain. The lyric must also be genuine, for here perhaps better than anywhere else can we determine the inspiration and the sincerity of the poet. If he has not had his vision, if he has not fused his thought and form with the fire of imagination, then the reader will not have a glimpse of this vision nor

will he be moved by the poet's suggestions or interpretations. The language of lyric poetry, furthermore, must—as Milton said of all poetry—be, above all, "simple, sensuous, passionate." Gray also touched the heart of the matter when he wrote: "Extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical, is one of the grand beauties of lyric poetry."

There are countless excellent lyrics in English and American poetry, but we shall suggest only a few: Waller's *Go, Lovely Rose;* Longfellow's *My Lost Youth;* Burns's *To a Mouse;* Blake's *The Tiger;* Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper* and *The Daffodils;* Byron's *She Walks in Beauty;* Keats's *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern;* Tennyson's *The Lotos-Eaters;* Henley's *Invictus;* Lanier's *Song of the Chattahoochee;* Letts's *The Spires of Oxford;* Patmore's *The Toys;* Masefield's *Sea Fever;* and Yeats's *When You Are Old.*

Dramatic Poetry

1. THE DRAMA

A *drama* is a species of literature that in a situation or story of conflict presents characters in action. Whereas ballads and epics are narrative, and lyrics are meditative, the drama is essentially presentative. The drama differs further in that it is objective; i.e., the writer should place himself in the background and never speak in his own person.

Good instances of the drama in poetic form are Shakespeare's great works, such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *Othello*, *Lear*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Henry IV*. We would have to include in our list such dramas also as Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *Edward II;* Dryden's *All For Love* and *The Conquest of Granada;* Byron's *Manfred;* Shelley's *The Cenci;* and Browning's *Pippa Passes* and *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*. Blank verse is the poetic form most frequently employed in the poetic drama.

2. THE DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

The *dramatic monologue* is the result of one character revealing his personality in some significant moment or crisis in life. The speaker is sometimes a mere spectator, but in most cases he lays bare his own soul as he gives us his ideas and feelings. Unlike the soliloquy, the dramatic monologue presupposes a listener, who apparently does not merely listen, but may ask questions, make comments, and give answers—only we do not know what he says; yet we know that he is present all the time, as if he were the other speaker in a conversation over the telephone. The best dramatic monologues are to be found in the works of Browning, particularly brilliant examples being *My Last Duchess*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, and *Andrea del Sarto*. Tennyson's *Maud* and Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Ben Jonson En-*

tertains a Man from Stratford would also come under this classification.

3. THE MASQUE

The *masque* (or *mask*) is only in part dramatic; it is a form of entertainment, more theatrical than dramatic, which for its effects depends mostly on music, dancing, and elaborate costuming. It is written and presented to honor and entertain some distinguished personage. Milton and Ben Jonson are the greatest writers of masques, and of all masques, Milton's *Comus* is, on account of its poetry, the most important from the literary point of view.

Minor Forms

After the three great classifications of narrative, lyric, and dramatic poetry, there are still such minor forms as descriptive, didactic, and satiric poetry; and what is known as light verse, which may be subdivided into *vers de société*, epigram, parody, and humorous and nonsense verse.

Under the heading of descriptive poetry there is included such poetry as parts of Thomson's *The Seasons*, and Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk;* and such "little pictures," or idylls, as Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, and Whittier's *Snowbound.*

Such poems as John Pomfret's *The Choice*, Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, and Wordsworth's *Character of the Happy Warrior* are didactic; while such as Dry-

den's *Absalom and Achitophel*, Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, and Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* are characterized chiefly by their satire.

Some famous poems in the *vers de société* classification are Shenstone's *Written at an Inn at Henley*, Locker-Lampson's *My Mistress's Boots*, Byron's *To Thomas Moore*, much of the work by Austin Dobson, Henley's *Villanelle*, Longfellow's *Beware*, and Gray's *Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat.* The following are all well-known *epigrams:* Dryden's *On Milton*, Earl of Rochester's *Epitaph on Charles II*, Gay's *My Own Epitaph*, and Landor's *On His Seventy-fifth Birthday.*

Humorous and nonsense verse includes such writings as Lewis Carroll's *Father William* and *Jabberwocky;* Edward Lear's *The Dong with a Luminous Nose*, *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, and *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat;* W. S. Gilbert's *Mister William;* and Thomas Hood's *Faithless Nelly Gray.* While much parody is really *vers de société*, most of it perhaps belongs to the humorous and nonsense classification as, for instance, Lewis Carroll's *Father William.* Among the greatest parodists in English poetry are Swinburne, Lewis Carroll, Thackeray, Charles S. Calverley, Bret Harte, Bayard Taylor, Phoebe Cary, Rudyard Kipling, and Louis Untermeyer. *Afternoon Tea*, a short sonnet sequence, by Arthur Guiterman, is a good illustration of both parody and *vers de société.*

V

SOME STANZA FORMS

The mazy-running soul of melody
Into my varied verse.
—THOMSON, *The Seasons. Spring*

So that verse being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it.
—SIDNEY, *The Defense of Poesy*

MUSIC and poetry are for the most part handmaidens to each other; they have the same ultimate origin. And just as music has its technique, just as a composer must prove his musicianship, so poetry in verse has its requirements. Students of music are familiar with such terms as waltz, quartet, ballet, sonata, and symphony; and students of poetry likewise must be able to identify ballad, lyric, epic, drama, ode, and the like. They can easily see, furthermore, that much of the great poetry of the world is written in certain conventional verse forms, which of course they should be able to recognize and appreciate. Such stanzas as the couplet, the quatrain, the *ottava rima*, and the Spenserian stanza should be familiar to everybody.

A *stanza* is made up of a number of lines of poetry arranged according to a definite scheme or pattern. Beginning with the couplet, we shall consider a number of these stanza forms.

I. THE COUPLET

The couplet, the shortest stanza possible in English verse, is made up of two lines, which in nearly every case end in rhyme. When the thought is completed at the end of the second line, the couplet becomes a favorite form for epigram or epitaph, as in Gay's

> Life is a jest, and all things show it,
> I thought so once, and now I know it.

or Dryden's

> Here lies my wife; here let her lie!
> Now she's at rest—and so am I.

An example of the unrhymed couplet is Emerson's

> The shining moment is an edifice
> Which the Omnipotent cannot rebuild.

These couplets are of course complete in themselves, but we more frequently find couplets employed in something of a succession throughout a poem. In this manner John Dyer's *Grongar Hill* is written, although there is a triplet here at the very end. The concluding lines of the poem will suffice as an illustration:

Be full, ye courts; be great who will;
Search for Peace with all your skill;
Open wide the lofty door,
Seek her on the marble floor;
In vain you search, she is not there;
In vain ye search the domes of Care!
Grass and flowers Quiet treads,
On the meads and mountain-heads,
Along with Pleasure, close allied,
Ever by each other's side;
And often, by the murm'ring rill,
Hears the thrush, while all is still,
Within the groves of Grongar Hill.

Compare also Vaughan's *The Retreat*, Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Scott's *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*, Keats's *Fancy* and *Ode*, Shelley's *Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills*, Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*, and Whittier's *Maud Muller*, *The Barefoot Boy*, and *Barbara Frietchie*.

Whenever there is a consideration of the couplet, it is nearly always the heroic couplet we have in mind. The *heroic couplet* is made up of heroic verses rhyming *aa*, *bb*, *cc*, and so on. (*Heroic verse* in English means verse of iambic pentameter lines.) Employed by such early poets as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Jonson, Waller, and Cowley, the heroic couplet was taken up by Dryden and Pope and brought to such a state of development that it fairly scintillated with wit and epigram. Under the pen of Pope it became for the most part the "closed" heroic couplet; that is, he used, as a rule, end-stopped lines and a balance of

idea and expression, with the result that each couplet is more or less complete in itself. There is in the chapter on rhyme a good illustration of Pope's technique (see p. 59). Samuel Johnson, Goldsmith, Crabbe, and Keats are others who used this most popular verse form of the eighteenth century. Goldsmith was perhaps the most natural and graceful of all those who had employed it up to his time. Keats, in *Sleep and Poetry* and in *Endymion* breaks away almost completely from the "closed" form. These lines from *The Deserted Village* evidence the easy charm of Goldsmith:

> And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,
> Still first to fly where sensual joys invade!
> Unfit, in these degenerate times of shame,
> To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;
> Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,
> My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;
> Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,
> Thou found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
> Thou guide by which the nobler arts excel,
> Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!

2. TRIPLET, OR TERCET; AND TERZA RIMA

A triplet, or as it is sometimes called, a tercet, is made up of three verses, which usually rhyme. (A *verse*, in poetical usage, means a line of poetry.) *For an Autograph*, by Lowell, begins in this way:

> Though old the thought and oft exprest,
> 'Tis his at last, who says it best,—
> I'll try my fortune with the rest.

Life is a leaf of paper white
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two, and then comes night.[1]

See also Longfellow's *Maidenhood*, Herrick's *Upon Julia's Clothes*, Crashaw's *Wishes to His Supposed Mistress*, Tennyson's *The Two Voices* and *The Eagle*, and Lamb's *The Old Familiar Faces*. Lamb's poem is unrhymed, but there is the linking refrain.

The most famous verse form made up of three-line stanzas is *terza rima* (literally "third rhyme"), the form Dante used in writing his *Divina Commedia*. The English language, lacking the profusion of rhymes possessed by the Italian and the other Romance languages, has few successful poems in *terza rima*. The most famous one is Shelley's sonorous *Ode to the West Wind*, of which this is the third section:

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystálline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

[1]Used by permission of, and arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company.

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

In this section we see that the rhyme scheme is *aba, bcb, cdc, ded, ee;* and thus observe that the rhymes are so interlaced that the word ending the middle line of each tercet rhymes with the words ending the first and third lines of the succeeding tercet, and that the group ends with a couplet. Compare also *The Statue and the Bust*, by Browning, and *The Defence of Guinevere*, by William Morris.

3. THE QUATRAIN

Of all the stanza forms in English the quatrain is the most frequently used. A quatrain is a stanza of four lines, usually rhyming in one of a number of definite ways. But Collins's *Ode to Evening* is a famous example of a great poem written in quatrains, without rhyme. The quatrain of easiest construction, probably, is the one made up of two couplets, and rhyming *aabb*, as in Blake's *The Tiger:*

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

Coleridge's *Love* has quatrains rhyming *xbyb;* that is, only the second and fourth lines rhyme:

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame.

But the rhymes may also be alternate, *abab*, as in the first of Wordsworth's "Lucy Poems":

Strange fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

In this stanza we have what is known as "common meter," or the *ballad measure*, which is a stanza of four lines, the first and third of which are iambic tetrameter, and the second and fourth, iambic trimeter. The rhymes may be alternate, but are as a rule *xbyb*.

Because of Tennyson's successful use of a variation in rhyme, the quatrain form in his great elegy is known as the "*In Memoriam* stanza," a very effective arrangement on account of the delayed rhyme in the fourth line. The stanza is iambic tetrameter and rhymes *abba*, as we see in the one following:

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water of the west
There comes a glory on the walls.[1]

[1]From Tennyson's *The Death of Œnone and Other Poems*. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Edward Fitzgerald in his translation of *The Rubaiyat* has an unusual quatrain, rhyming *aaxa* (in which *x* does not rhyme with any other line):

Yet ah, that Spring should vanish with the rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

Students should study the effects of such quatrains as are to be found in Longfellow's *Endymion*, Collins's *Ode to Evening*, Tennyson's *A Dream of Fair Women*, Keats's *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and Gray's *Elegy*.

In Gray's poem we have a stanza form known as the *heroic quatrain*, made up of four lines of iambic pentameter verse rhyming *abab*. Shakespeare's sonnets are really made up of three heroic quatrains followed by a heroic couplet.

4. FIVE-LINE STANZAS

Coleridge, ever alert with his musical ear, discovered the added pleasure in sound and rhythm afforded by the insertion of an extra line into the ballad measure:

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

Waller's *Go, Lovely Rose*, Shelley's *To a Skylark*, Swinburne's *Hertha*, Poe's *To Helen*, and Whittier's

Proem should be read in order to get the "feel" of unusual variations.

Both the *limerick* and the *cinquain* are forms which are complete in five lines. The former is more than a hundred years old, but the latter is of comparatively recent origin in English.

5. SIX-LINE STANZAS

About the simplest form of stanza of six lines is composed of a set of three couplets, as in the *Ode* (1746), by Collins. Another simple form is the *ababcc* scheme of Edward Dyer's *My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is:*

> My wealth is health and perfect ease;
> My conscience clear my chief defense;
> I neither seek by bribes to please,
> Nor by deceit to breed offense:
> Thus do I live; thus will I die;
> Would all did so as well as I!

Following are some of the many poems written in six-line stanzas: Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, Campion's *There Is a Garden in Her Face*, Hunt's *The Glove and the Lions*, Scott's *Lochinvar*, Byron's *She Walks in Beauty*, Shelley's *Song* ("Rarely, rarely, comest thou"), Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*, Browning's *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, Poe's *Eldorado*, Longfellow's *The Village Blacksmith*, Holmes's *The Last Leaf*, and Burns's *To a Mouse*.

Into this last mentioned poem, as well as in many

others, Burns introduced a stanza form to which the name, the "Burns stanza," has been given because of his excellent use of it. This is a famous one from *To a Mouse:*

> But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
> In proving foresight may be vain:
> The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
> Gang aft a-gley,
> An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain
> For promised joy.

6. SEVEN-LINE STANZAS; AND RHYME ROYAL

Rhyme royal (so called because it was believed that King James I was the first to use it) is the name of a special seven-line stanza used notably well by Chaucer, and, in our own day, by John Masefield, the present poet laureate of England. The seven lines of iambic pentameter rhyme in this order: *ababbcc.* As an illustration we may take a stanza from Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece:*

> Time's glory is to calm contending kings,
> To unmask falsehood, and bring truth to light,
> To stamp the seal of time in aged things,
> To wake the morn, and sentinel the night,
> To wrong the wronger till he render right,
> To ruinate proud buildings with thy hours,
> And smear with dust their glittering-golden towers.

The stanza of seven lines has been used very infrequently in English poetry, more infrequently, perhaps, even than the stanza of five lines; but Shelley's

To Night, Richard Hovey's *Seaward*, and Lowell's *An Indian-Summer Reverie* are all written in stanzas of seven lines.

7. EIGHT-LINE STANZAS; AND OTTAVA RIMA

Next to the quatrain, the stanza of eight lines is the most frequent in English poetry. There are numerous variations, as one can see by reading such poems as Lovelace's *To Althea, From Prison*, Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, and Swinburne's *The Garden of Proserpine*.

But the most famous stanza of eight lines is of course the *ottava rima*, which is made up of eight lines of iambic pentameter, rhyming *abababcc*. Carried from Italy to England by Wyatt and Surrey, it later became a favorite instrument in the hands of Byron (cf. *Beppo*, *The Vision of Judgment*, and *Don Juan*), and was handled very gracefully by Keats in *Isabella*. Longfellow employs it in *The Birds of Killingworth*, and Milton has this stanza in the last eight lines of *Lycidas*.

This is an *ottava rima* stanza from *Don Juan:*

Soft hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
  Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
  Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
As the far bell of vesper makes him start,
  Seeming to weep the dying day's decay;
Is this a fancy which our reason scorns?
Ah! surely nothing dies but something mourns!

The *triolet*, one of the French forms, is a complete poem written in a fixed form of eight lines. (See page 124.)

8. NINE-LINE STANZAS; AND THE SPENSERIAN STANZA

Of all nine-line stanzas the *Spenserian stanza* is far and away the most famous and has been the most popular with English poets. Brought about by the addition of a single line to the stanza as used by Chaucer in *The Monk's Tale*, Spenser has given to English versification its greatest single invention. The line which Spenser added is the ninth, an *Alexandrine*, which is the generally accepted name for an iambic hexameter line of verse. This ninth line is, therefore, one foot longer than the preceding eight, which are iambic pentameter. Technically, then, the Spenserian stanza is composed of nine lines, the first eight of which are iambic pentameter, and the ninth is iambic hexameter; and the rhyme scheme is *ababbcbcc*. Its peculiar, languorous effect has been aptly described by Holmes:

> The sweet Spenserian, gathering as it flows,
> Sweeps gently onward to its dying close,
> Where waves on waves in long succession pour,
> Till the ninth billow melts along the shore.[1]

Employed first by Spenser in his immortal *Faerie Queene* (two stanzas of which are quoted in the chapter on rhyme, p. 58 and p. 60), it has been used in such notable poems as Thomson's *The Castle of*

[1]From *Poetry: A Metrical Romance.* Houghton Mifflin Company.

Indolence, Shenstone's *The Schoolmistress*, Burns's *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Shelley's *Adonais* and *The Revolt of Islam*, and Keats's *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

The following stanza from *The Castle of Indolence* is another good example of this great stanza form:

A pleasing land of drowsyhed it was:
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky;
There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh;
But whate'er smacked of noyance, or unrest,
Was far far off expelled from this delicious nest.

Other interesting nine-line stanzas are to be found in Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* and in Bryant's *June*.

9. TEN-LINE STANZAS

Gray's *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, Herrick's *To Daffodils*, Wordsworth's *She Was a Phantom of Delight*, Lanier's *Song of the Chattahoochee*, and Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and several of his other odes contain stanzas of ten lines.

This is the second stanza of *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, by Keats:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
  Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
  Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

10. ELEVEN-LINE STANZAS

If one reads carefully the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *Ode on Indolence*, and *Ode to a Nightingale*, he will observe the effect Keats produced with variations in his ten-line stanza. In *To Autumn* Keats added another line (the tenth) to make an eleven-line stanza of great richness and beauty. As an illustration we quote the last stanza:

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir, the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Browning's eleven-line stanza in *The Last Ride Together* is of an entirely different type, and should be read with a view to its particular appropriateness to the mood of this poem.

11. TWELVE-LINE STANZAS

Bryant's *Song of Marion's Men*, Whittier's *Sunset on the Bearcamp*, Tennyson's *Sir Galahad*, and Mrs. Browning's *The Cry of the Children* are written in twelve-line stanzas. This is a stanza from Mrs. Browning's poem:

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart—
Stifle down with a mailéd heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashed upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.'

12. OTHER STANZAS

When the stanza reaches ten or eleven lines in length it becomes more or less unwieldy and consequently uncommon. There is also the danger of a lack of unity when the stanza becomes too pretentious. The sonnet, to be sure, has fourteen lines: but it consists of two parts, with a slight twist of the thought in the sestet; the Shakespearean sonnet we may regard as a group of three quatrains and a couplet. Not every poem or stanza of fourteen lines is a

sonnet. (See page 93). A poem of fourteen lines, complete in itself, but without the sonnet thought and arrangement, is known as a "fourteener."

Stanzas of thirteen or more lines in length are comparatively rare. Richard Hovey's *Men of Dartmouth* and Frank Dempster Sherman's *A Greeting for Spring* are examples.

Good examples of the stanza of fourteen lines are to be found in Herrick's *Corinna's Going A-Maying* and in Moore's *Oft in the Stilly Night.*

Swinburne's *Winter in Northumberland* and William Motherwell's *The Sword Chant of Thornstein Raudi* are written in stanzas of fifteen lines.

Probably the best stanzas of sixteen lines are to be found in the sequence entitled *Modern Love*, by George Meredith. Taking our cue from the "fourteener," we could possibly call these stanzas "sixteeners," which in their form might easily be mistaken at first glimpse for sonnets. Austin Dobson's *To "Lydia Languish"* is also written in a stanza form of sixteen lines.

The following is the ninth stanza of William Collins's *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, a very good stanza of seventeen lines:

Unbounded is thy range; with varied style
Thy Muse may, like those feathery tribes which spring
From their rude rocks, extend her skirting wing
Round the moist marge of each cold hebrid isle

To that hoar pile which still its ruin shows;
  In whose small vaults a pigmy-folk is found,
Whose bones the delver with his spade upthrows,
  And culls them wondering, from the hallowed ground!
Or thither, where, beneath the showery West,
  The mighty kings of three fair realms are laid;
Once foes, perhaps, together now they rest;
  No slaves revere them, and no wars invade;
Yet frequent now, at midnight's solemn hour,
  The rifted mounds their yawning cells unfold,
And forth the monarchs stalk with sovereign power,
  In pageant robes, and wreathed with sheeny gold,
And on their twilight tombs aerial council hold.

There are some stanzas having more than seventeen lines, but they are indeed exceptional. We have not by any means exhausted the list of poems written in the common stanza forms; we have, rather, merely suggested a few of the more or less well known. Every student of English poetry, and of English literature in general, should be able to recognize and explain—and if possible quote an example of—at least the couplet, the heroic couplet, the triplet, the *terza rima*, the quatrain, the ballad measure, the rhyme royal, the *ottava rima*, the Spenserian stanza, and the several kinds of sonnets (taken up in the following chapter). One of the best ways of learning these forms, we repeat, is to memorize at least one of each kind.

VI

THE SONNET

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
  Mindless of its just honors; with this key
  Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
  With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief;
  The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,
  It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faeryland
To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp
  Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

—WORDSWORTH

OF ALL the so-called fixed forms of verse, the sonnet is the noblest, the most frequently used, and the most justly famous. Brought over to England from Italy by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, it was originally an Italian verse form, deriving its name from *sonetto*, meaning a little sound, or song, which in turn comes from *suono*, a sound. This suggests that the earliest sonnets were sung or recited with musical accompaniment. Dante

and Petrarch were the first to write in this form. Petrarch, in fact, has given his name to this earliest and purest sonnet form, so that we call it the *Petrarchan*, or *Italian*, sonnet.

The *sonnet*, the most personal form of lyric poetry, is a poem of fourteen iambic pentameter lines, rhyming in a definite required manner; it must treat of only one theme or idea, amply and adequately; and it must be complete in itself. "The great object of the Sonnet," according to Hazlitt, "seems to be to express in musical numbers, and as it were with undivided breath, some occasional thought or personal feeling, 'some fee-grief due to the poet's breast.' It is a sigh uttered from the fulness of the heart, an involuntary aspiration born and dying in the same moment." Although the true sonnet form is the *Italian*, there are a few variations, the most important of which are the *Shakespearean*, the *Spenserian*, and the *Miltonic*. Beginning with the Italian type, we shall consider them in this order.

I. THE PETRARCHAN, OR ITALIAN, SONNET

Leigh Hunt, in his *Book of the Sonnet*, gives these interesting and correct rules for the construction of the sonnet:

> The sonnet, then, in order to be a perfect work of art, and make no compromise with a difficulty, must in the first place be a Legitimate Sonnet after the proper Italian fashion; that is to say, with but two rhymes to the octave and not more than three in the sestet.

Secondly, it must confine itself to the one leading idea, thought, or feeling.

Thirdly, it must treat this one leading idea, thought, or feeling in such a manner as to leave in the reader's mind no sense of irrelevancy or insufficiency.

Fourthly, it must not have a speck of obscurity.

Fifthly, it must not have a forced rhyme.

Sixthly, it must not have a superfluous word.

Seventhly, it must not have a word too little; that is to say, an omission of a word or words for the sake of convenience.

Eighthly, it must not have a word out of place.

Ninthly, it must have no very long word, or any other that tends to lessen the number of accents, and so weaken the verse.

Tenthly, its rhymes must be properly varied and contrasted and not beat upon the same vowel—a fault too common with very good sonnets. It must not say, for instance, *rhyme, tide, abide, crime;* or *play, game, refrain, way;* but contrast *i* with *o*, or with some other strongly opposed vowel, and treat every vowel on the same principle.

Eleventhly, its music throughout must be as varied as it is suitable; more or less strong, or sweet, according to the subject; but never weak or monotonous, unless, monotony itself be the effect intended.

Twelfthly, it must increase, or, at all events, not decline in interest, to its close.

Lastly, the close must be equally impressive and unaffected; not epigrammatic, unless where the subject warrants it, or where point of that kind is desirable; strength being paramount, where such elevation is natural, otherwise on a level with the serenity; flowing in calmness, or grand in the manifestation of power withheld.

With these rules in mind we might very appropriately subject to scrutiny the two following sonnets, both of which are written in the Italian form. The first, by Keats, is perhaps the best-known single sonnet in the English language, and the second, by Edwin Arlington Robinson, is undoubtedly one of the finest from modern poetry.

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

THE SHEAVES[1]

Where long the shadows of the wind had rolled,
Green wheat was yielding to the change assigned;
And as by some vast magic undivined
The world was turning slowly into gold.

[1]From Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Sonnets*. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Like nothing that was ever bought or sold
It waited there, the body and the mind;
And with a mighty meaning of a kind
That tells the more the more it is not told.

So in a land where all days are not fair,
Fair days went on till on another day
A thousand golden sheaves were lying there,
Shining and still, but not for long to stay—
As if a thousand girls with golden hair
Might rise from where they slept and go away.

Thus we see that the Italian sonnet is made up of two parts: the *octave*, the first eight lines; and the *sestet*, the last six lines. The octave may be further divided into two quatrains and the sestet into two tercets, all of which is clearly illustrated in Richard Watson Gilder's beautiful sonnet on the sonnet, which we have so arranged as to emphasize these divisions.

THE SONNET[1]

What is a sonnet? 'Tis the pearly shell
  That murmurs of the far-off murmuring sea;
  A precious jewel carved most curiously;
It is a little picture painted well.

What is a sonnet? 'Tis the tear that fell
  From a great poet's hidden ecstasy;
  A two-edged sword, a star, a song—ah me!
Sometimes a heavy-tolling funeral bell.

[1]Used by permission of, and arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company.

This was the flame that shook with Dante's breath;
The solemn organ whereon Milton played,
And the clear glass where Shakespeare's shadow falls:

A sea this is—beware who ventureth!
For like a fiord the narrow floor is laid
Mid-ocean deep sheer to the mountain walls.

There is presented in the octave of the Italian sonnet the subject matter, the theme, thought, idea, or feeling—the background; and in the sestet, the meditation on the subject, the application of the theme, or the conclusion. Consequently, there is always a kind of break, a turn in the thought, just after the eighth line. A sonnet on the sonnet, by Theodore Watts-Dunton, furnishes an excellent exposition of the swell in the octave and the resulting subsidence in the sestet; the thought comes to its height, the climax, at the end of the octave and then ebbs away in the calmer sestet. The sonnet follows:

THE SONNET'S VOICE[1]

Yon silvery billows breaking on the beach
Fall back in foam beneath the star-shine clear,
The while my rhymes are murmuring in your ear
A restless lore like that the billows teach;
For on these sonnet-waves my soul would reach
From its own depths, and rest within you, dear,
As, through the billowy voices yearning here,
Great Nature strives to find a human speech.

[1]Used by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

A sonnet is a wave of melody.
From heaving waters of the impassioned soul
A billow of tidal music one and whole
Flows in the "octave"; then, returning free,
Its ebbing surges in the "sestet" roll
Back to the deeps of Life's tumultuous sea.

In the Italian sonnet there is a certain rhyme scheme, which is inflexible in the octave. The first eight lines, therefore, always rhyme in this manner: *abbaabba*. In the sestet of the Italian sonnet the rhyme scheme may be either *cdcdcd* or else *cdecde*. There are some poets, it is true, who take liberties with the order of the rhymes in the sestet and vary the arrangement, but they are then not writing in the true Italian form.

Wordsworth, one of the greatest masters of the sonnet, found it a fitting instrument for his thought and expression when he was not wandering "at his own sweet will" in prolixity and diffuseness. He found, much to our gratification, that within the confines of fourteen verses there is much that can be said if the poet will cultivate clarity and conciseness of expression. As he himself wrote, in *Nuns Fret Not at Their Convent's Narrow Room*, a sonnet on the sonnet:

In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the sonnet's scanty plot of ground.

In the three sonnets by Wordsworth quoted below we note that the first (which is perhaps his most famous

one) is beyond criticism except for the slight variation in the position of the break in thought; that the second complies satisfactorily with the rules except that the order of rhymes in the sestet is *cddece;* and that the third is in keeping with the best traditions.

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
  Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
  Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
  The winds that will be howling at all hours,
  And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
  A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
  Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
  Or hear old Triton blow his wreathéd horn.

LONDON, 1802

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
  England hath need of thee: she is a fen
  Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
  Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
  Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.

Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE,
SEPTEMBER 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

One should hardly quarrel with Wordsworth for taking these slight liberties, since he has such a magnificent product withal! Wordsworth, moreover, in his great sonnet on the sonnet (quoted at the head of this chapter), even admonishes the critic not to be too captious or unjustly hypercritical. And, as if in a moment of pique, he condemns the strictness of the Italian rules by changing the rhymes in the

sixth and seventh lines and by ending the sestet with a couplet!

What the Sonnet Is, another sonnet on the sonnet, by Eugene Lee-Hamilton, is a beautiful example of the Italian type. A sixth well-known sonnet on the sonnet is Dante Gabriel Rossetti's from his sonnet sequence, *The House of Life*. It is more or less in keeping with the Italian model; but one readily observes that, though the ending is not epigrammatic, there is the couplet rhyme, the whole sestet rhyming *cdcdee*.

THE SONNET[1]

A Sonnet is a moment's monument,—
  Memorial from the Soul's eternity
  To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fullness reverent:
  Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
  As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
  The soul,—its converse, to what power 'tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
  Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

Andrew Lang, who was, among other things, an excellent translator, made, in collaboration with

[1]From Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The House of Life*. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

S. H. Butcher, what is usually regarded as the best translation of the *Odyssey*, and prefixed to it a sonnet, in which he has admirably suggested the spirit and significance of this great epic. Constructed in the "As—So" manner, it is quite Italian in structure except that the rhymes in the octave are possibly too similar and that there is a *cdeecd* arrangement of rhymes in the sestet.

THE ODYSSEY[1]

As one that for a weary space has lain
  Lulled by the song of Circe and her wine
  In gardens near the pale of Proserpine,
Where that Ægean isle forgets the main,
And only the low lutes of love complain,
  And only shadows of wan lovers pine,
  As such an one were glad to know the brine
Salt on his lips, and the large air again,
So gladly, from the songs of modern speech
  Men turn, and see the stars, and feel the free
    Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers
    And through the music of the languid hours
They hear like ocean on a western beach
  The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.

Of American poets Longfellow is outstanding in his mastery of this most exacting type of sonnet. His greatest group, entitled *Divina Commedia*, and prefixed to his translation of Dante's great poem,

[1]From S. H. Butcher and A. Lang's translation of the *Odyssey*. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

comprises what is perhaps the greatest poem in American literature. Inasmuch as there are six sonnets in this group, and since it would be unfair to quote just two or three of them, we shall have to content ourselves with two other sonnets as a sample of Longfellow's quality as a sonnet writer. In these, both the octave and the sestet are regular, the sestet rhyming *cdecde*. *Nature* is like Lang's *The Odyssey*, a sonnet constructed on the "As—So" plan. In the sonnet *Chaucer* it is to be noted that *clerk* has the British pronunciation, which makes it rhyme identically with *Clark*.

NATURE[1]

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,
  Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
  Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
And leave his broken playthings on the floor,
Still gazing at them through the open door,
  Nor wholly reassured and comforted
  By promises of others in their stead,
Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;
So Nature deals with us, and takes away
  Our playthings one by one, and by the hand
    Leads us to rest so gently, that we go
Scarce knowing if we wish to go or stay,
  Being too full of sleep to understand
    How far the unknown transcends the what we know.

[1]Used by permission of, and arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company.

CHAUCER[1]

An old man in a lodge within a park;
The chamber walls depicted all around
With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,
And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,
Whose song comes with the sunshine through the dark
Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;
He listeneth and he laugheth at the sound,
Then writeth in a book like any clerk.
He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with song; and as I read
I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note
Of lark and linnet, and from every page
Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead.

We believe that the following sonnet by Charles Phillips shares with Richard Watson Gilder's sonnet, already quoted, and Edwin Arlington Robinson's "The Master and the Slave" the distinction of being one of the best three sonnets on the sonnet written by American poets.

MIRACLE[2]

What shall the sonnet be?—a chiselled thing
Cut scrupulously from the marble's chill
Pure grandeur; something perfect, chaste and still?
Or shall it be alive, and shall it sing?

[1]Used by permission of, and arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company.

[2]Quoted from *High in Her Tower*, through the courtesy of Charles Phillips.

What shall the sonnet be?—a challenging
That shall so glow and overflow and fill
The heart with feeling and the mind with will
That on its word the soul shall rise a-wing?

This shall the sonnet be: of carven word,
Perfect and chaste to the minutest line,
Yet not by the poet's careful art alone
Fashioned and shaped, but as the soaring bird
That, touched of Heaven's Hand, with love divine
Leaps lark-like, skyward, from the insensate stone.

2. THE SHAKESPEAREAN SONNET

Next to the Petrarchan, or Italian, sonnet, the most famous form is the *Shakespearean*—called the Shakespearean, not because Shakespeare was the first to use it, but because he used it the most felicitously. His sonnet sequence (made up of 154 sonnets) is the greatest sonnet sequence in our language. It is just another illustration of the fact that Shakespeare was not the greatest of innovators, but that he was great in developing and improving ideas and forms already current. He was a consummate adapter and adopter.

Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, having brought the pure Italian sonnet to England, soon broke away from its restrictions and began to write poems of fourteen lines in the form that Shakespeare obtained from them. Wyatt liked a final couplet, and Howard began writing his verses in groups of three quatrains preceding the couplet. This type is sometimes known as the *English*, as well as the

Shakespearean, sonnet. It is, as George Gascoigne described it, "a poem of fourteen lines, every line containing ten syllables, the first twelve riming in staves of four lines by cross meter, and the last two riming together." The purist will of course deny that such a stanza is a sonnet at all, but how can one be a purist in the face of Shakespeare?

As we know it, then, the Shakespearean sonnet is composed of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter, rhyming *ababcdcdefefgg;* the first twelve lines are made up of three quatrains, and the last two are in the form of a couplet, which serves for a summary or epigrammatic "point." For the sake of emphasizing the quatrains and the couplet, we may write the rhyme scheme in this order: *abab cdcd efef gg.*

In this form of sonnet there is for the most part either a three-stage development of a single idea in the quatrains, or else three separate though related ideas, followed in either case by the summarizing or applicative couplet. William Sharp has described the Italian and the Shakespearean sonnets thus: "The Shakespearean sonnet is like a red-hot bar being moulded upon a forge till—in the closing couplet—it receives a final clinching blow from the hammer; the Petrarchan sonnet, on the other hand, is like a wind, gathering in volume and dying away again immediately upon attaining its culminating force." The following three sonnets by Shakespeare are very good illustrations of his technique and of this form; they are so arranged here as to show

effectively the unity, the alternate rhymes, and the quatrain and couplet arrangement together with the rhyme scheme.

XVIII

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;
  So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
  So long lives this and this gives life to thee.

XXX

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
  I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
  And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste;
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
  For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since canceled woe,
  And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
  And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er,
The sad account of fore-bemoanéd moan,
  Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored and sorrows end.

LXXIII

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
  When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
  Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
  As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
  Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
  That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
  Consumed with that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To live that well which thou must leave ere long.

3. THE SPENSERIAN SONNET

Edmund Spenser, inventor of the nine-line stanza named after him, is the inventor also of a form of sonnet—a form which differs from the *Shakespearean* only in the rhyme scheme. The *Spenserian* sonnet is made up of three quatrains and a concluding couplet, the whole rhyming *ababbcbccdcdee*. Indulging fondness for carry-over rhymes Spenser very characteristically links the quatrains, so that, stressing the parts, we have this order of rhymes: *abab bcbc cdcd ee*. Spenser, of course, was not influenced by Shakespeare —whose sonnets had not yet been written—but by

the experiments of Wyatt and Surrey. The following sonnet (LXXV) from his sequence, *Amoretti*, is characteristic of Spenser's sonnet style:

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washéd it away:
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.
Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay
A mortall thing so to immortalize!
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
And eek my name bee wypéd out lykewize.
Not so, (quod I) let baser things devize
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens wryte your glorious name;
Where, whenas death shall all the world subdew,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

4. THE MILTONIC SONNET

Milton took the Italian sonnet and made of it a personal form, marked not so much by variation of rhyme as by lack of the sharp division of thought between the octave and the sestet. In the *Miltonic* sonnet there is rather a culmination of the thought, an accumulation of power or effect as the end nears. *On His Blindness* is a typical Miltonic sonnet.

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

VII

FRENCH FORMS

They best can judge a poet's worth,
  Who oft themselves have known
The pangs of a poetic birth
  By labours of their own.

—Cowper, *To Dr. Darwin*

To the student of poetry I would suggest two rules: write it, whether he has a creative gift or not; slave away at it in its most exacting forms. Then destroy it. If, later in life when he has something to say, he has a need to write, he will find that he is prepared. If not, he is richer in the possession of a disciplined vocabulary.

—DuBose Heyward

THERE is, perhaps, no better way to understand the technique of verse than to attempt to write it. Practice in any one of the more rigid forms of English verse—let us say, for example, the sonnet—requires such a thorough study of the form itself that one is certain to be led into an interesting and rewarding familiarity with some of the most graceful and beautiful of our poetry and to acquire a new appreciation of it.

In particular is this true of those forms of English

verse which, because they found their origin in France, are known as the *French Forms*. In such of them as the ballade, the rondeau, the triolet, the villanelle, the rondel, and the sestina—to name but a few—one will find everything that good poetry demands, for those forms are not only exacting ones but they are, as Lydgate put it, "Full delectable to heare and to se."

To call these the *French Forms* is today somewhat inappropriate, because, since their introduction into English poetry by Austin Dobson in the latter part of the nineteenth century, they have been so widely used by our own poets that they have lost, for the most part, their exoticism and have been made our own. Swinburne was a master of them, and such contemporaries of his as Andrew Lang, William Ernest Henley, Edmund Gosse, and Austin Dobson, whom we have already named, did some of their best work in these forms. In addition one might extend the list of poets who have been successful with them to include such names as Thomas A. Daly, Don Marquis, Louis Untermeyer, Clinton Scollard, John McCrae, Richard Le Gallienne, Carolyn Wells, Franklin P. Adams, Christopher Morley, Edward Anthony, Brander Matthews, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Arthur Guiterman, and Gilbert K. Chesterton.

In her *Lyric Forms from France* Helen Louise Cohen traces in detail the origin and development of certain of these forms from the earliest type of

refrain poetry, the dance-song, to the complicated and perfected forms as we know them today. She suggests that in the majority of these forms every line of the song was alternated at first with a refrain, and that gradually the number of lines was increased, until finally certain of them were made to rhyme with the refrain itself. This soon found its way into the stanza, which had its arrangement ultimately established by very definite rules.

The more important of the French Forms will be studied separately below, but because of certain similarities in origin and formation, the ballade, the double ballade, the ballade à double refrain, and the chant royal should be grouped together; and the triolet, the roundel, the rondel, the rondeau, and the rondeau rédoublé should be placed in a separate group.

I. THE BALLADE

The *ballade* (not the *ballad*—the two are vastly different) was used in English poetry as early as the time of Chaucer, who wrote, it has been estimated, about sixteen ballades. But although the form had been most popular in France before Chaucer's day, his own contemporaries made so little use of it that probably not more than a hundred and twenty could today be found in all of Middle English poetry.

The most widely known of very early English

ballades is undoubtedly one of Chaucer's which occurs in his *Prologue* to *The Legend of Good Women*, but one cannot overlook also two triple ballades of his called *Fortune* and *The Compleynt of Venus*. Ballades by Lydgate are to be found in his *The Temple of Glas*, *The Serpent of Division*, *The Fall of Princes*, *The Legend of Seynt Margarete*, and *The Flour of Courtesye*. But the form did not really become popular in English verse until its introduction in the latter part of the nineteenth century by Austin Dobson and Edmund Gosse. Let us note one or two ballades that we may the more closely observe their structure. We quote first of all Swinburne's *Ballad Written for a Bridegroom*, in the title of which, it should be observed, Swinburne uses the word *ballad* (as do many writers); but the poem is, nevertheless, a *ballade*.

BALLAD WRITTEN FOR A BRIDEGROOM[1]

WHICH VILLON GAVE TO A GENTLEMAN NEWLY MARRIED TO SEND TO HIS WIFE WHOM HE HAD WON WITH THE SWORD.

At daybreak, when the falcon claps his wings,
No whit for grief, but noble heart and high,
With loud glad noise he stirs himself and springs,
And takes his meat and toward his lure draws nigh;
Such good I wish you! Yea, and heartily
I am fired with hope of true love's meed to get;
Know that Love writes it in his book; for why,
This is the end for which we twain are met.

[1]Quoted from Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*, with the permission of Messrs. Harper and Brothers.

Mine own heart's lady with no gainsayings
You shall be always wholly till I die;
And in my right against all bitter things
Sweet laurel with fresh rose its force shall try;
Seeing reason wills not that I cast love by
(Nor here with reason shall I chide or fret)
Nor cease to serve, but serve more constantly;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

And, which is more, when grief about me clings
Through Fortune's fit and fume of jealousy,
Your sweet kind eye beats down her threatenings
As wind doth smoke; such power sits in your eye.
Thus in your field my seed of harvestry
Thrives, for the fruit is like me that I set;
God bids me tend it with good husbandry;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Princess, give ear to this my summary;
That heart of mine your heart's love should forget,
Shall never be; like trust in you put I:
This is the end for which we twain are met.

This ballade by Swinburne is a good example of the more stately and serious type, but the form is an exceedingly adaptable one and may, as Gleeson White observes in his excellent little volume, *Ballades and Rondeaus*, "be sonorous or stately, playful or easy, at the will of its writer, as, in capable hands, it can strike any note in the gamut of passions, from religious exaltation or fierce grim satire, to actual pathos, or, if needful, pure burlesque." Perhaps one of the most skillful ballades, done in the lighter vein, is the following very amusing one by Christopher Morley:

BALLADE OF LIBROLARCENY[1]

When this ballade appears in print
  Someone will feel a guilty thrill,
So circulate it without stint
  And shout it loud on every hill.
The bibliopilfering bibliophil
  Perhaps will ponder and repent
To hear me cry with accent shrill
  Where are the books that I have lent?

Where are my Gissings gone, I hint?
  Whose bookcase do my Conrads fill?
And my *Decameron?* I squint
  Along my shelves and feel a chill:
Lavengro gone! O imbecile
  To lend that book! Yes, I am shent.
I'll put your conscience on the grill:
  Where are the books that I have lent?

My Daisy Ashford, my *Peer Gynt*,
  My *Ocean Tramp*—all gone! Until
Those books come back my heart is flint;
  My *Trivia*, too—a bitter pill!
Now by the root of Ygdrasil
  I ask where my Max Beerbohms went?
And so I roar, with metric skill,
  Where are the books that I have lent?

ENVOY

The bibliokleptomaniac will
  Reply (of course) he truly meant
To bring them back last week. . . . But still
  Where are the books that I have lent?

[1]Copyright, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

After a study of the above two ballades we may note the rules which govern the form. The ballade is made up of three stanzas, each consisting of eight lines (certain more uncommon forms permit stanzas of ten lines and an envoy of five lines), and a final stanza, or *envoy*, of four lines, which usually sums up the entire poem, or dedicates it to some personage of high rank. The rhymes in each of the stanzas may be indicated by the following letter arrangement: *ababbcbc;* and the rhymes of the envoy as *bcbc*. Furthermore, the ballade strictly requires that no word or sound which is used in one line may be used again as a rhyme in any other part of the poem. The whole form rests upon one line (called the refrain) which is repeated at the end of every stanza and also at the end of the envoy. This refrain is often expressed in the form of a question which begins with the words "Where are." Thus Edmund Gosse concludes his *The Ballad of Dead Cities* by asking, "Where are the cities of old time?"; and Clinton Scollard his *Where Are the Ships of Tyre?* by repeating the title as his refrain; and Austin Dobson his *A Ballad to Queen Elizabeth* with "And where are the galleons of Spain?"

We might list the following as further examples of ballades that will repay careful study: Rossetti's *The Ballad of Dead Ladies*, Chesterton's *A Ballade of the First Rain*, Andrew Lang's *Ballade to Theocritus, In Winter*, Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Ballade by the Fire* and *Ballade of Broken Flutes*, Austin Dobson's *A*

Ballad of Heroes and *The Ballad of Imitation*, Thomas A. Daly's *Ballade to the Women*, and Swinburne's *A Ballad of Dreamland*. As examples of the more uncommon form of the ballade—that mentioned above as employing a stanza of ten lines—see Swinburne's *The Epitaph in Form of a Ballad*, or Andrew Lang's translation of *The Ballade of the Voyage to Cythera*. The last named is modeled after Theodore de Banville, a French poet of the nineteenth century.

2. THE DOUBLE BALLADE

In this form six stanzas are used instead of three, and the envoy is usually omitted. Three rhymes are employed. The double ballade is such a complicated form that it has enjoyed little popularity among English poets, but Swinburne's *Double Ballad of August* and *Double Ballad of Good Counsel*, together with Henley's *Double Ballade of Life and Fate* and *Double Ballade of the Nothingness of Things* are good illustrations of it.

3. THE BALLADE À DOUBLE REFRAIN

This has the same rhyme scheme as the ordinary ballade. Two refrains, however, are employed, the first refrain being used as the fourth line of each stanza and as the second line of the envoy, and the second being used as the final line of every stanza and of the envoy. As a general rule, the two refrains represent a contrast in thought and feeling.

Among the more widely quoted ballades of this

type are Andrew Lang's *Ballade of the Real and Ideal*, Austin Dobson's *The Ballade of Prose and Rhyme*, Henley's *Ballade of Youth and Age*, and Brander Matthews' *Rain and Shine*. We quote a ballade by Henley as one of the most skillful and pleasing of this type.

BALLADE OF MIDSUMMER DAYS AND NIGHTS[1]

(Double Refrain)

TO W. H.

With a ripple of leaves and a tinkle of streams
The full world rolls in a rhythm of praise,
And the winds are one with the clouds and beams—
Midsummer days! Midsummer days!
The dusk grows vast; in a purple haze,
While the West from a rapture of sunset rights,
Faint stars their exquisite lamps upraise—
Midsummer nights! O midsummer nights!

The wood's green heart is a nest of dreams,
The lush grass thickens and springs and sways,
The rathe wheat rustles, the landscape gleams—
Midsummer days! Midsummer days!
In the stilly fields, in the stilly ways,
All secret shadows and mystic lights,
Late lovers murmur and linger and gaze—
Midsummer nights! O midsummer nights!

There's a music of bells from the trampling teams,
Wild skylarks hover, the gorses blaze,
The rich, ripe rose as with incense steams—
Midsummer days! Midsummer days!

[1]Quoted with the permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

A soul from the honeysuckle strays,
And the nightingale as from prophet heights
Sings to the Earth of her million Mays—
Midsummer nights! O midsummer nights!

ENVOY

And it's O, for my dear and the charm that stays—
Midsummer days! Midsummer days!
It's O, for my Love and the dark that plights—
Midsummer nights! O midsummer nights!

4. CHANT ROYAL

This is one of the most complicated forms of the ballade group. In all probability it derives its name from the fact that it was usually written for some king or because the form was thought deserving of royal favor. The *chant royal* is made up of five stanzas, each having eleven lines, and, in most cases, the rhyme scheme *ababccddede*. The envoy has five lines with the rhyme arrangement *ddede*. It should be added that the refrain constitutes the final line of each stanza and also the final line of the envoy, and that no rhyme word may be used twice throughout the entire poem. Louis Untermeyer in his *The Forms of Poetry* quotes Dobson's *The Dance of Death* as the "most famous and by all odds the best chant royal" that we have; but other outstanding chants royal (note the plural of the form) are Gosse's *The Praise of Dionysus*, John Payne's *Chant Royal of the God of Love*, Clinton Scollard's *King Boreas*, and Richard Le Gallienne's *The Destined Maid: A Prayer*.

5. THE RONDEAU

Both in origin and adaptability the *rondeau* has very much in common with the ballade. In subject matter and expression it may range from such serious and restrained poems as Dobson's *In After Days* and John McCrae's *In Flanders Fields* to such skillful and adroit ones as Louis Untermeyer's *A Burlesque Rondeau*. Two of the finest descriptions of the form itself are the ones we quote below. "*You Bid Me Try*," a paraphrase by Austin Dobson of one of Voiture's famous rondeaus, is one of the most skillful examples we have; while *The Rondeau*, by Don Marquis, is one of the most graceful.

"YOU BID ME TRY"[1]

You bid me try, Blue-Eyes, to write
A Rondeau. What!—forthwith?—tonight?
Reflect. Some skill I have, 'tis true;
But thirteen lines!—and rhymed on two!
"Refrain," as well. Ah, hapless plight!

Still, there are five lines—ranged aright.
These Gallic bonds, I feared, would fright
My easy Muse. They did, till you—
You bid me try!

That makes them eight. The port's in sight—
'Tis all because your eyes are bright!
Now just a pair to end in "oo"—
When maids command, what can't we do?
Behold!—the Rondeau, tasteful, light,
You bid me try!

[1]From Henry Austin Dobson's *Complete Poetical Works*, by permission of Mr. Alban Dobson and The Oxford University Press.

THE RONDEAU[1]

Your rondeau's tale must still be light—
No bugle-call to life's stern fight!
  Rather a smiling interlude
  Memorial to some transient mood
Of idle love and gala-night.

Its manner is the merest sleight
O' hand; yet therein dwells its might,
  For if the heavier touch intrude
    Your rondeau's stale.

Fragrant and fragile, fleet and bright,
And wing'd with whim, it gleams in flight
  Like April blossoms wind-pursued
  Down aisles of tangled underwood;—
Nor be too serious when you write
    Your rondeau's tale.

The *rondeau* is a poem of thirteen lines—usually each line has eight syllables—employing but two rhymes, and an unrhymed refrain which is made up of the first half of the first line of the poem and which occurs at the end of the second stanza and at the end of the poem. No words must be changed in this refrain although in certain parodies and burlesques on the rondeau, puns have been used with an effect that is both startlingly original and amusing. Thus in *A Burlesque Rondeau*, which was mentioned above, Louis Untermeyer maintains the sound of the original

[1]From *Dreams and Dust*, by Don Marquis. Copyright, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

refrain, but changes the spelling and meanings so that the original "Cum tu, Lydia" becomes next "Come to Lydia" and finally "Come to! Lydia"! Or again, Michael Lewis burlesques his original refrain, "My lady's eyes," so that it reads next, "My lady sighs," and finally, "My lady's size"! For further examples of this form one should refer to Helen Louise Cohen's *Lyric Forms from France.*

6. THE VILLON RONDEAU

This is the name most generally applied to a variation of the rondeau that permits ten lines and an unrhymed refrain which is used twice. Its rhyme arrangement might be represented as *abba—abR—abbaR.* (*R* stands for the refrain.) For a good example of this type see Austin Dobson's *In Vain Today.*

7. THE ROUNDEL

We owe to Swinburne not only the invention of the *roundel* but also a hundred of its most adroit and graceful examples, which he collected in *A Century of Roundels.* If we again let *R* stand for the refrain (which in this form almost always rhymes with the *b* rhyme) we might represent the scheme of the roundel as *abaR—bab—abaR.* Swinburne's group of roundels called *Étude Réaliste* is very probably the most famous group in his entire collection.

8. THE RONDEL

This is nothing more than the original spelling of the French *rondeau*, but since the fourteenth century it has come to be a distinct form in itself. Although there are at least two different types, the rhyme order which is most popular is the following: *ABba—abAB —abbaA*. (The capital letters indicate the lines which remain unchanged.) In form the *rondel* strongly resembles both the triolet and the rondeau. It permits of but two rhymes and does not allow the repetition of any of the rhyme words. Perhaps the most frequently quoted rondel is Dobson's *The Wanderer*, but other well-known examples (some of them variations of the more usual type) are John Payne's *Rondel*, Henley's *Rondel*, and Edmund Gosse's *Rondel*.

9. THE TRIOLET

The term *triolet* was first used during the fifteenth century to designate an earlier form of the rondeau which was written in eight lines. During the next two or three hundred years it came to be valued as a medium for effective political satire, and, although there were lulls in its popularity, it grew in France until sometime during the seventeenth century. The Caroline poet, Patrick Carey, and the nineteenth century poet, George MacDonald, both employed the form as a religious lyric. The former poet is referred to by Sir Walter Scott in his novel *Woodstock*,

and in an early edition of Carey's works, which Scott was largely instrumental in having printed in 1819, the following three very fine examples of Carey's triolets occur:

I

Worldly designs, fears, hopes, farewell!
Farewell all earthly joys and cares!
On nobler thoughts my soul shall dwell,
Worldly designs, fears, hopes, farewell!
At quiet, in my peaceful cell,
I'll think on God, free from your snares;
Worldly designs, fears, hopes, farewell!
Farewell all earthly joys and cares.

II

I'll seek my God's law to fulfil,
Riches and power I'll set at naught;
Let others strive for them that will,
I'll seek my God's law to fulfil:
Lest sinful pleasures my soul kill,
(By folly's vain delights first caught,)
I'll seek my God's law to fulfil,
Riches and power I'll set at naught.

III

Yes (my dear Lord) I've found it so;
No joys but thine are purely sweet,
Other delights come mixt with woe,
Yes (my dear Lord) I've found it so.
Pleasure at courts is but in show,
With true content in cells we meet;
Yes (my dear Lord) I've found it so,
No joys but thine are purely sweet.

From an examination of the above illustrations it will be seen that the triolet is a poem of eight lines with the entire first line repeated as the fourth line and again as the seventh; and the second line, as the final one in the poem. If we let the capital letters represent the lines which remain intact, the rhyme arrangement of the triolet would be *ABaAabAB*. Various meters are allowed. The triolet which we quote below is suggestive of the lightness and grace of the form. In it Don Marquis has very felicitously described the form itself.

THE TRIOLET[1]

Your triolet should glimmer
  Like a butterfly;
In golden light, or dimmer,
Your triolet should glimmer,
Tremble, turn, and shimmer,
  Flash, and flutter by;
Your triolet should glimmer
  Like a butterfly.

The triolet is such a short and apparently simple form of poetry that at first sight it might seem an easy one to write. And yet to write a good one is very difficult indeed, for, as Gleeson White observes, "the triolet affords so little space to explain its motif, and within its five lines must tell its story, and also carry the three other repeated ones so easily, and with a definite meaning." Extreme care must

[1]Copyright, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

be taken to avoid monotony in the refrain, which must always have an effect of freshness and naturalness. In reading the following triolet by Henley one should therefore remember that the triolet is indeed easy to make only if you really have learned to make it.

TRIOLET[1]

Easy is the Triolet,
If you really learn to make it!
Once a neat refrain you get,
Easy is the Triolet.
As you see!—I pay my debt
With another rhyme. Deuce take it,
Easy is the Triolet,
If you really learn to make it!

Some other fine triolets are those of Dobson's series called *Rose Leaves*, Adelaide Crapsey's *Song*, Robert Bridges' *Triolet* (he has two fine ones with this title), and the series, *Vestigia*, by Arthur Symons.

10. THE RONDEAU RÉDOUBLÉ

This is not to be thought of as a double rondeau. The *rondeau rédoublé* employs six stanzas of four lines each and requires that the lines rhyme alternately on but two rhymes. Each line of the first stanza occurs respectively as the last line of the four following stanzas; and the first half of the first line of the first stanza is used as the last line of the poem.

[1]Quoted with the permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, publishers.

Some good examples of this form are Tomson's *Rondeau Rédoublé*, Untermeyer's *A Complacent Rondeau Rédoublé*, and John Payne's *Rondeau Rédoublé*.

II. THE VILLANELLE

The *villanelle* is supposed to have been invented during the sixteenth century by the French poet, Jean Passerat. Originally it was chiefly of a pastoral nature, but it has since been recognized as a form which permits of more varied subjects. Franklin P. Adams's *Villanelle, With Stevenson's Assistance* is so fine that we quote it here before examining the structure of the form.

VILLANELLE, WITH STEVENSON'S ASSISTANCE[1]

The world is so full of a number of things
  Like music and pictures and statues and plays,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

We've winters and summers and autumns and springs,
  We've Aprils and Augusts, Octobers and Mays—
The world is so full of a number of things.

Though minor the key of my lyrical strings,
  I change it to major when paeaning praise:
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

Each morning a myriad wonderments brings,
  Each evening a myriad marvels conveys,
The world is *so* full of a number of things.

[1]From *Weights and Measures*, by Franklin P. Adams. Copyright, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

With pansies and roses and pendants and rings,
  With purples and yellows and scarlets and grays,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

So pardon a bard if he carelessly sings
  A solo indorsing these Beautiful Days—
The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

From the above example it will be seen that the villanelle consists of five stanzas of three lines each and a final stanza of four lines. The first line of the first stanza becomes the refrain of the second and fourth stanzas, and the last line of the first stanza is used as the refrain of the third and fifth stanzas. Both of these refrain lines then become the concluding lines of the entire poem. The first five stanzas thus rhyme *aba* and the final stanza *abaa*.

We list the following as excellent examples for further reading: Dobson's *For a Copy of Theocritus* and *When I Saw You Last, Rose*, Clinton Scollard's *Villanelle to the Daffodil*, Edwin Arlington Robinson's *The House on the Hill*, Untermeyer's *Lugubrious Villanelle of Platitudes*, and Henley's *Villanelle*.

12. THE SESTINA

The sestina and the chant royal are probably the most difficult and complicated of all the French Forms. The sestina is supposed to have been invented by the Provençal poet, Arnaut Daniel, upon whom Dante himself says he modeled his own sestinas.

As good illustrations of the sestina we might recommend Swinburne's *Rizzio's Love-Song* and his *Sestina*, Kipling's *Sestina of the Tramp-Royal*, and Edmund Gosse's *Sestina*. But good examples of it are none too common, for its complexity makes it more of a metrical exercise than anything else.

It makes use of six stanzas (hence its name) which contain six lines each that do not have to be rhymed. In addition to these six stanzas the sestina employs an envoy (sometimes called the *tornada*) of three lines. The form is still further complicated, moreover, by the fact that the last word in each line of the first stanza must appear in a prescribed order as the last word in some line of each of the succeeding stanzas. By quoting the following from Gosse, we can perhaps make this more clear.

SESTINA[1]

TO F. H.

In fair Provence, the land of lute and rose,
Arnaut, great master of the lore of love,
First wrought sestines to win his lady's heart;
For she was deaf when simpler staves he sang,
And for her sake he broke the bonds of rhyme,
And in this subtler measure hid his woe.

"Harsh be my lines," cried Arnaut, "harsh the woe,
My lady, that enthron'd and cruel rose,
Inflicts on him that made her live in rhyme!"

[1]From Edmund Gosse's *Collected Poems*. By permission of William Heinemann, Ltd.

But through the metre spake the voice of Love,
And like a wild-wood nightingale he sang
Who thought in crabbéd lays to ease his heart.

It is not told if her untoward heart
Was melted by her poet's lyric woe,
Or if in vain so amorously he sang.
Perchance through crowd of dark conceits he rose
To nobler heights of philosophic love,
And crowned his later years with sterner rhyme.

This thing alone we know: the triple rhyme
Of him who bared his vast and passionate heart
To all the crowning flames of hate and love,
Wears in the midst of all its storm of woe,—
As some loud morn of March may bear a rose,—
The impress of a song that Arnaut sang.

"Smith of his mother-tongue," the Frenchman sang
Of Lancelot and Galahad, the rhyme
That beat so bloodlike at its core of rose,
It stirred the sweet Francesca's gentle heart
To take that kiss that brought her so much woe
And sealed in fire her martyrdom of love.

And Dante, full of her immortal love,
Stayed his drear song, and softly, fondly sang
As though his voice broke with that weight of woe;
And to this day we think of Arnaut's rhyme
Whenever pity at the labouring heart
On fair Francesca's memory drops the rose.

Ah! sovereign Love, forgive this weaker rhyme!
The men of old who sang were great at heart,
Yet have we too known woe, and worn thy rose.

Letting the numbers, in their natural order, stand for the last word in each line of the first stanza, we see the order in which each word must appear as the final word in each succeeding stanza. This order might be presented thus:

Stanza 1—1 2 3 4 5 6
Stanza 2—6 1 5 2 4 3
Stanza 3—3 6 4 1 2 5
Stanza 4—5 3 2 6 1 4
Stanza 5—4 5 1 3 6 2
Stanza 6—2 4 6 5 3 1

The tornada, it should be noted, makes use of all six final words: half of them within the lines and the other half at the ends. Their order is thus:

First line of tornada—2 5
Second line of tornada—4 3
Third line of tornada—6 1

One would suppose that any poet would consider a form like this sufficiently complicated, but Swinburne and at least one other poet, George Barlow, have actually each written a double sestina containing twelve stanzas of twelve lines each. For the examples we mention we refer the reader to *The Complaint of Lisa* in Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* and to *Alone* in Barlow's *A Life's Love*.

13. SOME OTHER FRENCH FORMS

In addition to the French Forms of poetry which we have treated in this chapter, certain others might

be given, which, either because of their origin in France or because of their adoption by French poets, are usually classed under this heading. But they are, perhaps, not quite common enough to merit a full discussion here, and we merely suggest that the student who is interested in studying this subject in greater detail read a fuller treatment of these forms in a more comprehensive volume. We list, however, such forms as the *virelai nouveau*, the *pantoum*, the *glose*, the *lay*, and the *Kyrielle*.

VIII

FREE VERSE

> The true test of poetry is sincerity and vitality. It is not rhyme, or metre, or subject. It is nothing in the world but the soul of man as it really is. Carlyle's *French Revolution* is a great epic poem; so are Trevelyan's three volumes, *Garibaldi and the Italian War of Independence*. That they are written in prose has nothing to do with the matter. That most poems are written rhythmically, and that rhythm has come to be the great technical fact of poetry, was, primarily, because men under stress of emotion tend to talk in a rhythmed speech. Read Lincoln's "Address at Gettysburg" and "Second Inaugural," and you will see.
>
> —Amy Lowell, *Poetry and Poets*[1]

"WHAT!" cried Theodore de Banville, the nineteenth century French poet, in speaking of poetic license in a small book which he wrote on French poetry, "under the pretense of writing in verse, that is to say in the tongue which demands rhythm and orderliness above all else, you claim the right to be disorderly and to violate the rules. . . ." There are many people today who say the

[1]Used by permission of, and by arrangement with, Houghton Mifflin Company.

same thing to the poet who writes in what is called *vers libre* or, as it is known in English, *free verse*—there are many people who say that such a one is not a poet at all—that in the words of Pope, his

> fustian's so sublimely bad,
> It is not poetry, but prose run mad.

And, indeed, it might as well be admitted at the outset that a very large number of "poems" that are printed today as free verse, *are* nothing more than "prose run mad," or prose that is typographically arranged upon the page as poetry. But it is not quite fair to judge all of free verse by these insincere and faulty examples. *Good free verse is good poetry.*

It might be well at the beginning of this chapter to consider very briefly the two most important objections which the opponents of free verse make to the form. They object chiefly to the fact that free verse discards meter and, very frequently, rhyme. But then, as we saw in the first chapter, neither meter nor rhyme is an essential of poetry. To illustrate this there could be pointed out in English poetry a long list of beautiful selections that are not metrical. For example, such poems, to name but a few, as Arnold's *Philomela* or his *The Future*, Blake's *Infant Joy*, and Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* have a rhythm which is hardly regular enough to be called metrical; and yet certainly not even the most conservative of critics would deny that these

selections are poems—and great ones too! Who of us will not recognize the poetry in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* or in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound?* Yet the meter of both of these selections is varied so much (in Shelley's poem it has been estimated that there are at least thirty-eight different meters) that it is often so irregular as to seem, paradoxically, not to be meter at all. And the same is true of many of the greatest poems in our language: the feet are often so mixed, the substitutions so numerous, that line after line is irregular. Must we not be forced to the conclusion, then, that meter is not essential to poetry?

Nor is rhyme an essential of poetry. For if it were, then we would have to admit that *Paradise Lost* and *Ulysses* and *Samson Agonistes* and *Dr. Faustus*—we would have to admit, as a matter of fact, that *all* blank verse is not poetry. We would even be forced to deny that there is poetry in all of the sublime and noble passages in the Bible! We would hear the impassioned cry of Job and then say that that is not poetry. We would feel the compelling power in Faustus's speech to Helen:

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?—
> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—
> Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!
> Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
> Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena.

I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy, shall Wertenberg be sacked;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colors on my pluméd crest;
Yes, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
O, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azured arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour!

and hear old Ulysses tell his aged wife, Penelope, of the wanderlust in his blood; and listen to the soliloquy of Hamlet; and feel the emotion in Dickens's concluding pages of *A Tale of Two Cities* or in his description of the death of Little Nell—and in all of this we would have to deny the presence of that imagination and beauty and power that constitute the thing which we call poetry!

Let us admit at once, then, that neither the absence of meter nor the absence of rhyme can keep free verse from being poetry. As a matter of fact, it even happens, occasionally, that free verse is rhymed. The *vers libre* poems written in French frequently use rhyme and even in English such selections as Lindsay's *General William Booth Enters Heaven*, *The Sante Fe Trail*, and *The Fireman's Ball* might be mentioned as examples of rhymed free-verse poems.

At this point one might wonder why it is that, if

free verse is not metrical, we can call it verse at all. For did we not insist in the first chapter that verse must be metrical? The answer is that, strictly speaking, "free verse" is *not* verse. The expression comes, as we have said, from the French expression *vers libre* which really means "free *line*" and consequently, when we use the term "free verse" we are using it incorrectly. Amy Lowell, who was until her death some few years ago the principal exponent of the free-verse movement in America, pointed this out on more than one occasion; but despite her protests that verse could never be free, we persist in using this misnomer. We should remember that poetry may permit an irregular or free line, but that verse demands a regularity in the rhythm.

It will be seen, therefore, that free verse differs from ordinary verse only in its lack of meter. For in place of the patterns of regular rhythm, free verse substitutes a broader and more general pattern that is known as *cadence*. This quality is nothing new in poetry, for Shakespeare himself recognized it when he spoke in *Love's Labour's Lost* of the "elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy." We may define *cadence* as the falling of the voice in the reading of the poem. The pattern which free verse makes use of is thus one of a balance in the rhythm, a certain pendulum-like swing which follows the natural fall of the voice in the reading. To make the matter more clear we might explain that free verse is divided into certain units or *strophes* as they are called (the

strophe in the Greek choral dance was that part of the ode which the chorus sang while making a complete circle around the altar from right to left), and each of these strophes constitutes a cadence in that the voice will naturally fall at the end of a reading of it. As Miss Lowell suggested, it would, for this reason, be more correct to use the term *cadenced verse* instead of free verse, for the pattern employed is, after all, nothing but one of cadence.

In the volume *Some Imagist Poets, 1916*, there is an analogy which will make the meaning of cadence still more clear. We are asked to imagine a person's having a circle to travel around in—a circle which he must traverse in exactly two minutes. Then it is suggested that this person be required to reach the end of the first half of this circle in just one minute, and the end of the second half, or the starting point, at the end of the second minute. Now he might hurry or loiter as much as he likes as long as he reaches these two points of the circle exactly on time. And so it is with the cadences of free verse; some syllables of the strophe in the free-verse poem we will read very slowly; others we will hurry over. But every strophe must consume about the same amount of time in the reading; the swing and balance must, in each case, be the same.

It goes without saying that cadence is usually to be found in good prose as well as in poetry. And the more emotional the prose is, the more likely is it to have this broad pattern of rhythm which overlaps

and subsumes the rhythm of the stresses on the syllables. Thus the description of the death of Little Nell which Dickens gives us in *The Old Curiosity Shop* is a good example of prose that is cadenced.

The following passage from The Book of Job—

For thou hast taken away the pledge of thy brethren without cause, and stripped the naked of their clothing.

Thou hast not given water to the weary, thou hast withdrawn bread from the hungry.

In the strength of thy arm thou didst possess the land, and being the most mighty thou holdest it. (XXII. 6-8)

might be divided as we give it here:

For thou hast taken away the pledge of thy brethren without cause, and stripped the naked of their clothing.
Thou hast not given water to the weary.
Thou hast withdrawn bread from the hungry.
In the strength of thy arm thou didst possess the land, and being the most mighty thou holdest it.

Now let us note a free-verse poem to see exactly what we mean when we say that the form is based upon a broad and irregular rhythm and balance instead of upon meter.

REGRET[1]

Your gossamer bridge
Stretched across my path.
Being a woman,

[1]Reprinted with the permission of Alice E. Clear and the *Commonweal.*

I am grieved to see
Your frail web shattered.
I have a love for weavers,
And a grief for dreams.

—Alice E. Clear

In reading the above we notice that the rhythm balances itself into a sort of pendulum-like swing that will result in these cadences: "Your gossamer bridge stretched across my path" will be the first; "Being a woman" will be the second; "I am grieved to see your frail web shattered" the third; "I have a love for weavers" the fourth; "And a grief for dreams" the fifth. Dividing the poem into its strophes we would therefore have the arrangement here suggested:

Your gossamer bridge stretched across my path.
Being a woman
I am grieved to see your frail web shattered.
I have a love for weavers.
And a grief for dreams.

Now it is true that some of the above cadences contain a larger number of syllables than do others. But this does not matter. The thing that does matter is that in each case the time element in each one is almost the same. Some of the cadences will have to be read faster than others; some will have to be read very slowly to fill out the swing and complete the balance. But this balance is maintained and the time of each complete swing, or—to carry out the

analogy suggested above—the time allowed to complete each circle, is identical.

In her *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, Amy Lowell selects a short poem from the works of "H. D." to illustrate cadence, and since it is such a compact and clear example, we quote it here:

OREAD[1]

Whirl up, sea—
Whirl your pointed pines,
Splash your great pines
On our rocks,
Hurl your green over us,
Cover us with your pools of fir.

Free verse is no new thing in poetry. Examples of what approximates it may be found, as we have already suggested, in the poetry of Blake and Arnold and other nineteenth century poets. But it was really Whitman who precipitated the free verse movement in America when he published in 1855 his *Leaves of Grass*. For until this time poets had been somewhat hesitant about discarding regular meter: the poets of the New England group, for example, had been content, for the most part, to sing in very metrical language. But with the growth of the democratic spirit and the advance of industrialism there had sprung to the attention of the newer poets a number of subjects which it was difficult to treat

[1]From *Collected Poems*, by "H. D." By permission of Horace Liveright, Inc.

in regular meter: a freer and more unrestricted form was needed to express the rapidly changing aspects of the newer civilization. Then Whitman appeared, championing as he did, "Always the free range and diversity"; and though much of what Whitman wrote is really not free verse, and some of it, again, is not even good poetry, still he did have a fresh and invigorating effect upon American poetry. Above all, he taught our modern poets how to free themselves from the closed and rigid forms, which were often no longer flexible enough for the expression of many of the new subjects which they were beginning to write about. In *Poets To Come*[1] he prophesies the free-verse movement and vigorously states his attitude toward the new poetry:

Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!
Not today is to justify me and answer what I am for,
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater
than before known,
Arouse! for you must justify me.

I myself but write one or two indicative words for the
future,
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in
the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping,
turns a casual look upon you and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you.

[1]Copyright, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

Today almost every poet of importance has done some writing in this form, but perhaps no school of poets has handled it quite so successfully as have the *Imagists*. This is a group of poets who were so named because one of the things they advocated in their credo was the presentation of an image. It numbered during its incipiency such poets as Ezra Pound (who published his *Des Imagistes* as early as 1914), Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle (known as "H. D."), Amy Lowell, John Cournos, F. S. Flint, Skipwith Cannell, Ford Maddox Hueffer, and William Carlos Williams. Later the group narrowed down to Amy Lowell, John Gould Fletcher, "H. D.," Richard Aldington, F. S. Flint, and D. H. Lawrence. Through the efforts of Miss Lowell the group issued in 1915 the first of a series of three yearly anthologies of their work, and in this volume, *Some Imagist Poets*, they listed the various tenets, six of them altogether, of their literary credo. They admitted at the outset that these tenets were not new ones, but they insisted upon the necessity of dragging them out of the desuetude into which they had fallen and of calling the attention of poets to them.

For one thing, they insisted that the language of poetry should be "the language of common speech," that it should avoid, as far as possible, clichés (a *cliché* is a stamped and stereotyped expression which has been so often used in poetry that it has the effect of triteness as, for example, *the dusk of evening*, *arms of Morpheus*, *pure as a lily*), and that it should use

always the "exact word" in describing its images. They insisted further that poetry should be highly concentrated, that it should avoid being blurred and should instead be "hard and clear." The credo suggested that the poet should have "absolute freedom" in selecting the subject matter of his poetry so long, of course, as he kept within the bounds of good taste. And, finally, it advocated the creation of newer rhythms—the Imagists most probably were thinking of free verse here—to give the poet a better chance to express his own individuality and the moods which the newer subjects might awaken in him. Every reader of the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* will recall that Wordsworth had anticipated some of these ideas in the very first part of the nineteenth century when he said:

> The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men. . . . There will be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction. . . .

But that these ideas had fallen into disuse and were in need of being resurrected, no reader who is familiar with the poetry written by, let us say, the New England group of poets in our own country, can deny.

In any treatment of free verse one must give some attention to a form of poetry which such of the free

verse writers as Amy Lowell and John Gould Fletcher excelled in. We refer to what is commonly called *polyphonic prose*. This is a form which has the same typographical arrangement on a page as prose has, but which makes use of all of the "voices" (*polyphonic* means "many-voiced") or effects which regular poetry commonly makes use of. It employs all the common devices such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, rhyme, cadence, and meter. As an example of it we give the first paragraph of John Gould Fletcher's "Clipper-Ships"[1]:

> Beautiful as a tired cloud, skysails set and shrouds twanging, she emerges from the surges that keep running away before day on the low Pacific shore. With the roar of the wind blowing half a gale after, she heels and lunges, and buries her bows in the smother, lifting them swiftly and scattering the glistening spray-drops from her jibsails with laughter. Her spars are cracking, her royals are half splitting, her lower stunsail booms are bent aside, like bowsprings ready to loose, and the water is roaring into her scuppers, but she still staggers out under a full press of sail, her upper trucks enkindled by the sun into shafts of rosy flame.

The reader should note in the above such words as *cloud*, *shrouds*, *emerges*, *surges*, *away*, *day*, *low*, *shore*, *roar*, *blowing*, *half*, *gale*, *after*, and the other numerous examples of assonance and rhyme which occur throughout the entire selection. The effect is truly

[1]From *Breakers and Granite*. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

melodic and beautiful, and the form is but one of the results of the experimentation of some of the free verse writers.

What is to be said, in conclusion, concerning free verse? First of all, that it has most probably come to stay, for our modern life has given us materials for poetry that do not readily adapt themselves to ordinary verse. Who, for example, can imagine Carl Sandburg's *Skyscraper* written in metrical language? Subjective poetry, it would appear, is best when written in such a language; but certain objective materials and themes are best sung about in a language that is not confined by meter. And here free verse presents a decided advantage, for the poet will not find himself constricted by the requirements of regular rhythm—he will not be tempted to lengthen his lines by adding words or extra thoughts merely to fill out the meter. Instead, he can sing more freely and spontaneously, and the only pattern he need conform to is the natural one which his emotions cause in the general balance of the rhythm.

Secondly, one should remember that one must beware of cheap imitations of free verse, of those examples of it written by poetasters who use the apparent freedom and flexibility of the form as a refuge for their own poor craftsmanship or lack of poetic inspiration. Such examples are all too numerous, and in our enthusiasm for the new we are likely to be too tolerant of that bad writing which goes so

far towards prejudicing people's minds against the free verse that is really genuine poetry.

And finally, let us remember that free verse does not differ as radically from regular verse as many people think. Just as regular verse may be rhymed or unrhymed, so may free verse be rhymed or unrhymed. This leaves as its chief distinguishing mark its absence of regular rhythm. And as poetry is not dependent upon meter or rhyme but rather upon connotation and sincerity and emotional intensity, good free verse, let us repeat it again, *good free verse is good poetry*. For where the poet gives us these, he gives us poetry regardless of how he clothes it or what form he uses as long as that form is conducive to the beauty of the poem itself; for, as Macaulay has said, "The merit of poetry, in its wildest forms, still consists in its truth—truth conveyed to the understanding, not directly by the words, but circuitously by means of imaginative associations, which serve as its conductors."

IX

FIGURES OF SPEECH

Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit and play with similes.
—WORDSWORTH, *To the Daisy*

DEFINITIONS and examples of some of the more common figures of speech are given below:

A *simile* is an expressed resemblance between unlike objects. It is usually introduced by *like* or *as*. "A simile, to be perfect, must," as Dr. Johnson observed, "both illustrate and ennoble the subject; must show it to the understanding in a clearer view, and display it to the fancy with greater dignity; but either of these qualities may be sufficient to recommend it."

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she.
—COLERIDGE, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

But pleasures are like poppies spread—
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river—
A moment white, then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;

Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.
—BURNS, *Tam O'Shanter*

Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.
—SHELLEY, *Adonais*

I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light.
—VAUGHAN, *The World*

'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.
—POPE, *Essay on Criticism*

Jealousy is like
A polished glass held to the lips when life's in doubt;
If there be breath, 'twill catch the damp, and show it.
—DRYDEN, *All For Love.* IV

A *metaphor* is an implied resemblance between unlike objects in that it declares that the one thing is another, without the use of comparing words. It is as a rule a more effective figure than the simile. In Wordsworth's sonnet (p. 92) we find that the sonnet is called not only a key and a small lute and a myrtle leaf, but also a lamp and a trumpet; in each case there is an assumed comparison—a metaphor.

Friendship is a sheltering tree.
—COLERIDGE, *Youth and Age*

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.
—WORDSWORTH, *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*

Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care;
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.
—*Macbeth.* II. 2

Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
The reading of an ever-changing tale;
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,
Riding the springy branches of an elm.
—KEATS, *Sleep and Poetry*

A notable brief stanza in literature making use of both metaphor and simile is in Wordsworth's *She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways:*

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

Personification is a figure whereby inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities.

Here, where precipitate Spring, with one light bound
Into hot Summer's lusty arms, expires.
—LANDOR, *A Fiesolan Idyl*

And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu.
—KEATS, *Ode on Melancholy*

Jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
—*Romeo and Juliet.* III. 5

Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
—MILTON, *L'Allegro*

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll.
—GRAY, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

Apostrophe is the sudden breaking away to address some person or thing, absent or present.

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills and Groves,
Forbode not any severing of our loves!
—WORDSWORTH, *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*

You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason.
—*Julius Caesar.* III. 2

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean,—roll!
—BYRON, *Childe Harold*

O, storm of death!
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night:
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still

Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee.

—SHELLEY, *Alastor*

Hyperbole is excessive exaggeration for literary effect.

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

—*Macbeth.* V. 1

So frowned the mighty combatants that Hell
Grew darker at their frown.

—MILTON, *Paradise Lost.* II. 719–20

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

—*Macbeth.* II. 1

Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

—EMERSON, *Concord Hymn*

Metonymy is a figure whereby the object is not named, but only some significant aspect of it.

Fortune came smiling to my youth, and wooed it,
And purple greatness met my ripened years.

—DRYDEN, *All For Love.* I

The bright death quiver'd at the victim's throat;
Touch'd; and I knew no more.
—TENNYSON, *A Dream of Fair Women*[1]

These two lines from Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* illustrate both exclamation and metonymy:

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!

Synecdoche (so similar to metonymy that nowadays there is little effort made to distinguish them) is a figure whereby some striking part of an object stands for the whole, or the whole for the part.

A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a Daniel!
O wise young judge, how do I honour thee!
—*Merchant of Venice.* IV. 1

There moved the multitude, a thousand heads.
—TENNYSON, *The Princess*[1]

The gilded parapets were crown'd
With faces, and the great tower fill'd with eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.
—TENNYSON, *Pelleas and Ettarre.*[1]

Antithesis is the balancing of contrasts in words or ideas.

To err is human; to forgive, divine.
—POPE, *Essay on Criticism*

[1]From Tennyson's *The Death of Œnone and Other Poems.* By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.
—MILTON, *Paradise Lost.* I. 262–3

Look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't.
—*Macbeth.* I. 5

Exclamation is frequently used for artistic effect. The order of the sentence in which this figure occurs is nearly always inverted.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
—SHELLEY, *Queen Mab*

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!
—*Hamlet.* II. 2

Oh, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance!
—SHELLEY, *Alastor*

Vision is treating the absent as if present, or the distant as near.

I hear the noise about thy keel;
  I hear the bell struck in the night;
  I see the cabin-window bright;
I see the sailor at the wheel.
—TENNYSON, *In Memoriam*[1]

I see thee glittering from afar—
And then thou art a pretty star.
—WORDSWORTH, *To the Daisy*

A *conceit*, in its literary significance, is an ingenious or witty thought or expression; a fanciful or extravagant figure of speech.

There is a garden in her face
  Where roses and white lilies grow;
A heavenly paradise is that place,
  Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow.
—CAMPION, *There Is a Garden in Her Face*

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
  Like seasoned timber, never gives.
—HERBERT, *Virtue*

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.
—DONNE, *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning*

A *kenning* is a bold metaphor or indirect description, such as we find in *Beowulf:* "the gannet's-bath,"

[1]From Tennyson's *The Death of Œnone and Other Poems.* By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

"the swan-road," and "the whale-path" are terms for the sea; "ring-giver" or "protector-of-earls" is the king; a sword is the "product-of-files," "light-of-battle," or "warriors'-friend"; and "shaft-of-slaughter" is a spear.

X

SOME POETS AND CRITICS ON POETRY

A Symposium

"NEXT to being a great poet," says Longfellow in his *Hyperion*, "is the power of understanding one." Because this is so true we believe that the student will find in the following symposium not only material for interesting and rewarding discussion, but also material which, by helping him understand poets, will help him all the more in understanding poetry. And because poetry is not a dead thing—but rather something fresh and alive and eternal—we have included in this symposium some definitions and comments by living poets (most of these from personal letters) as well as some by the older ones.

Hervey Allen: Poetry is that form of written or oral address whose aim is to convey by means of a synthesis of symbolical and rhythmical language a pleasurable vicarious experience to the imagination.

Hilaire Belloc: I do not think that poetry can be defined by any other word except magic, and that is a

primary idea incapable of analysis; just as a colour or a musical sound is incapable of analysis. This transcendental element of magic is what distinguishes poetry from prose. It is not, of course, universally present in any poetic work, and is more effectual in some few lines of any poem than in the rest. But its general presence is essential to distinguish poetry from prose or prose-like verse.

Edmund Blunden: Poetry, for me, is the result of a sort of chemical combination or interfusion of many faculties; inherited and new experience, a love of language and its musical variety meet especially in it, when some incident or symbol presents itself so as to seem exactly apt to those powers. One says, a permanent poem is a matter of luck; the leading idea and its image, the tune, the balance of the whole, the texture of the words, all move in a symmetry which defies application; indeed it is "luck" when, instead of a general glimmer, through a mist, the ray is pure for a moment. It comes to a great number of people, and the number of poems perfect in their way *is* great; their profundity is what varies mainly, *i.e.* the richness of character, wisdom, and expressive observation which they sum up. I have a host of lesser poets to whom I turn with delight, for their books contain delicate, distinct perpetuations of what they were as men and women in life and thought and sense of speech; they have their charmed occasions; but they cannot pass their bounds.

Nor can I do more for the aspirant poets who approach me than try to say which of their pieces most nearly resembles easy perfection of their own general notions and airs. I do say: Beware of poetry, regard her as a jealous goddess, shun the shrine for fear of blasphemy, etc.; in brief, write under sheer compulsion and put it off as long as possible. Meanwhile, enjoy life, or hate it, and listen to the conversation of your race on enjoying it and hating it. More poetry is heard in familiar speech than is printed in the journals.

Anna Hempstead Branch: I think we know poetry entirely by its being poetry—just as we know blue because it is blue or red because it is red. It's a sort of primary color—beyond definition in terms of qualities. Poems, of course, do have certain auric properties of music, form, etc. But I rather suspect that essential poetry is known by essential poetry.

Carlyle: For there is no heroic poem in the world but is at bottom a biography, the life of a man; also, it may be said, there is no life of a man, faithfully recorded, but is a heroic poem of its sort, rhymed or unrhymed.

Coleridge: Poetry is the blossom and the fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language.

. . . . . .

A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth.

. . . . .

What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, What is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. . . .

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of Imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control (*laxis effertur habenis*) reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.

EMILY DICKINSON: If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?

DRYDEN: Poetry is articulate music.

EMERSON: The finest poetry was first experience.

. . . . .

Poetry is the perpetual endeavor to express the spirit of the thing, to pass the brute body and search the life and reason which causes it to exist.

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE: There comes to every man a moment when he grows infinitely weary of the pompous confusion and cruel ignorance which is so elaborately organized to constitute human society—a moment when the heart is aware that the collective judgment of mankind is merely the brutal roaring of the loudest voices, and that this corrupt oracle can never by any chance be as wise as the whispers of the individual soul. At such a moment, in a profound repudiation of all the intricacies of forms and faiths, the heart quietly turns back to its own intuitions as to a guide more trustworthy than all the parliaments of man. It is at this level of solitary experience that poetry may be born.—From "The Nature of Poetry" in *Selected Poems*.[1]

[1]Copyright, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.

ROBERT FROST: It is absurd to think that the only way to tell if a poem is lasting is to wait and see if it lasts. The right reader of a good poem can tell the moment it strikes him that he has taken an immortal wound—that he will never get over it. That is to say, permanence in poetry as in love is perceived instantly. It hasn't to await the test of time. The proof of a poem is not that we have never forgotten it, but that we knew at sight we never could forget it.

. . . . .

The way I know poems from non-poems is by the way they are made. When I read other people's poetry I ask myself if it began in a mood. That mood picks up an idea and the idea then flows into words and sentences.

. . . . .

A poem begins with a lump in the throat; a home-sickness or a love-sickness. It is a reaching-out toward expression; an effort to find fulfilment. A complete poem is one where an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words.

HAZLITT: Poetry is the natural expression of any object or event by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of imagination and passion, and producing by sympathy a certain modulation of the voice or sounds expressing it.

ALICE CORBIN HENDERSON: Every definition requires another definition; i.e. everything is defined

in terms of something else; and absolutes are probably beyond definition. But the experiment of attempting a definition of an absolute is interesting. Poetry is one of the absolutes. . . .

Poetry is a verbal form of instinctive (therefore universal) rhythm.

To state the quality that most distinguishes "true poetry", one would have to define what "true poetry" means. To do both at once, I should say that "true poetry" is characterized by an *essential sincerity;* i.e. without this essential sincerity there is some subterfuge between the author and his work, and hence (whether realized or not) between the author and reader.

I should suggest that the student be taught (or educate himself) to look for this quality.

DuBose Heyward: Now, in our own time when, more than ever before, the brain is required to function at high tension, when most of us are utterly brain-weary, I ask of poetry one thing—escape. Unless a poet possesses the power to transport me emotionally he has given me little that I cannot get from prose. It seems almost superfluous to add that unless the poet possesses the power to experience emotion intensely, and surrender himself wholly to its demand, it will be impossible for him to invoke that same joy or agony in his reader.

A. E. Housman: I am afraid that I can no more define poetry than a terrier can define a rat. We

both recognize the object by its effect on our senses. For instance, if a line of poetry comes into my memory while I am shaving, the hair bristles on my skin, and I have to stop.

LEIGH HUNT: Poetry . . . is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity. Its means are whatever the universe contains, and its ends pleasure and exaltation.

ROBINSON JEFFERS: The word "poetry" is one of those abstract words covering a complex of things—like the word "beauty"—so various for different persons that the only definition I could give would be a bad one out of a dictionary. I suppose the point is to distinguish poetry from unpoetic verse and from poetic prose.

As to the latter, it seems to me that the word "poetry," at least in English, implies some form of verse. Verse (I should say, without looking in the dictionary) is a form of speech characterized by rhythmic recurrences, so that there is a noticeable and fairly regular correspondence of some sort between the lines, or lines and stanzas.

I think the difference between poetry and unpoetic verse lies in the appeal of poetry to the aesthetic emotion. So that one might say that poetry is

beautiful verse. But the beauties of verse may be so various (and disputable)—from sublimity of subject to mere virtuosity of expression—that personal taste must in the end do the distinguishing.

I think the quality I most value in poetry is that of imaginative power activated by strong emotion, so that the imagination is not displayed idly for a show, but as if of necessity and in earnest, under emotional compulsion.

As to practical suggestions for a student beginning the study of poetry—of course there are many ways. It seems to me I'd begin with ballads of action—Scott's Border Minstrelsy, if the dialects were not too difficult. Then short lyrics, as of Shelley, Keats, Herrick, Andrew Marvell. For a study of poetic form, I'd direct the student's attention to accentual imitations of classic meters, like Tennyson's and Swinburne's, and to some well-made rendering in modern English of the old versification of Beowulf and Piers Plowman, as well as to the metrical instances of today and last century. And some Old Testament poetry, to face the Hebrew verse like an echo in the mountains.

JOHNSON: Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the aid of reason.

. . . . .

The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights.

KEATS:

A drainless shower
Of light is poesy; 'tis the supreme of power;
'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.

. . . . .

Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle or amaze it with itself—but with its subject. . . .

. . . . .

Poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance. . . . It is easier to think what poetry should be, than to write it. . . . If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all.

ALFRED KREYMBORG: I do not feel that any one definition of poetry can possibly define poetry completely. The more one works in verse, especially if one works in many varied forms, the more one hesitates about finalities of opinion. None the less, the temptation to define so elusive an art as poetry is one to which each succeeding generation succumbs, and we have had . . . some happy definitions.

To the student who is beginning the study of poetry, I should say that he should try to keep his heart and mind opened to as many varied poets as his given temperament can admit, and never to be too hasty in his judgments for or against a given poet.

In other words, he should try to achieve a catholicity of taste, and to train his personality to receive impersonal impressions.

VACHEL LINDSAY: Mr. Lindsay "concurs in Milton's definition of poetry as 'simple, sensuous, and passionate.'"

AMY LOWELL: See page 134.

MACAULAY: Poetry is the art of employing words in such a manner as to produce an illusion on the imagination; the art of doing by means of words what the painter does by means of colours.

EDWIN MARKHAM: True poetry is distinguished by its insight into life and by its beautiful and imaginative expression of this insight. Naked truth does not constitute poetry: the truth must come wearing the veil of beauty. Mere didacticism is the deadly heresy in the gospel of poetry. And yet the true poem must be so worded as to leave upon us a high mood: true poetry must elevate the soul.

I have made a voluminous anthology, which I call *The Book of Poetry*. . . . On the opening page I have printed my definition of poetry. Here it is:

Poetry is the expression—under the light of the imagination—of the unfamiliar beauty of the world, the beauty that is the smile upon the face of truth. Poetry is the

revelation of the strange in the familiar, of the eternal in the transitory. It is the impassioned cry of the heart in the presence of the wonder of life.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS: When he [Edgar Allan Poe] could not see the whole of the *Iliad* as poetry I part company with him, and come back to some one who said that poetry is invention. But that won't quite do. Nor will it do to say that poetry must have rhyme; though it must have rhythm of some sort in order to induce the peculiar psychical state which comes as the poetical effect of words. There are passages in Burke and in Webster that lift one; but they are not poetry; because poetry is a much more exalted influence than they excite. But where words are chosen which have the power of conjuring the highest feelings, just because by some necromancy they have taken into themselves strange powers of suggestion and imagination, there the great poetical effect is achieved, and this may happen in some of the inspired lines of Shakespeare and also in passages that have nothing beyond the form of prose. In a word, whatever gives me the poetical effect, I call poetry—whatever in words, I mean; and that is as near as I can come to a definition just now.

JOHN STUART MILL: Eloquence is *heard;* poetry is *over*heard. Eloquence supposes an audience. The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's

utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind.

HAROLD MONRO: It is inherent in the nature of poetry, and natural to its character, that it should elude definition. The ten to twenty more famous epigrammatic phrases in which the attempt has been made are, in varying ways, satisfactory up to a point, but none completely. If I compel myself to formulate my ideas on the subject, I find myself writing some such words as the following:

> Poetry is the expression of unique personality combined with disciplined imagination and acute observation. Technically, it is constructed of the fewest possible number of words arranged in their most essential and most rhythmical order.

But this is only dry and dull. A book is needed, or at any rate an essay, such as Matthew Arnold's "Introduction to *Ward's English Poets*."

Undoubtedly the quality that most distinguishes true poetry is that of unstinted imaginative energy, controlled only, but not limited, by style. It cannot exist without sincerity. Emotional intensity is inherent in a vigorous imagination. Form is consequent.

The matter of poetry can derive from any source

in the universe. It is not the subject that makes the poem, but the poet.

I am under the impression that all definite practical suggestions to the student who is beginning the study of poetry are to be found in the various text-books. I have never thought about the matter, but, if I do so, I find my suggestions shaping themselves as follows:—

Look through several histories of literature, make your own deductions, and draw up for yourself a diagram, schedule, or chart, divided into periods. Study simultaneously, but lightly at first, the historical associations and literary significance of each period. Your interest will intensify for some rather than for others, and your instincts will direct you to these each time that you return to your work. Obey these instincts, though not entirely to the detriment of the periods that attract you less. Of them you can make links.

As soon as your taste becomes definite, begin to learn by heart the poems that you love best. Recite them often to yourself in the inner mind. Analysis of a too acute or critical kind may interfere; but, as a student, you must discover why they are poetry, and why you love them. The object of the student should be to make of poetry, as it were, a possession, to incorporate it into his temperament. Then, if he also study its technique, and, in all cases, be fully apprehensive of its historical setting, he will be able to pass any examination.

HARRIET MONROE: Poetry is an imaginative and rhythmical expression in words of man's life and ideas.

JOHN G. NEIHARDT: Fancy yourself as going forth some golden day of early spring into a windless forest. You have gone there to chop summer wood, and you are looking for a tree that will make the most satisfactory fuel. You pass the basswoods and the sycamores and even the oaks. You are scientific, and you know that, although oak makes a good fire, hickory is better. You do not fall to chopping the first hickory tree you find, for trees differ in adaptability to your purpose. You want the most wood for the least effort. At last you stand before a hickory that suits your common sense purpose and you gaze upward along the bole, noting the soaring taper of it. The place is very quiet, and it may be that your thrifty neighbor would describe you as lazy. Perhaps he would be right, for him. But there is surely a sense in which it is true that by going far one finds nothing and by going fast one overtakes nothing. In fact, you should have been getting up your summer wood during the winter, for the sap has already begun to lift; the maples are oozing; there is a stippling of leaf buds against the blue; soft white clouds go over; a few birds flute and chatter.

Then, if you are a certain sort of person—that is to say, if you are not altogether sense-bound—something wonderful may happen to you. Suddenly the tree conceived as hickory firewood fades away. With a timeless sense, in which the very identity of the woodchopper is lost, you may feel the ecstatic

upward suck of resurrected life through bole and branch and twig, almost as though the body of the tree were your own. And there will be something very much like love in the sense and something near to happy tears—when it has become a memory. This may pass in a flash, however long the time; but all that day you are likely to be kinder than usual—even to the dogs you may chance to meet. You have felt the larger relations and lost yourself in them.[1]

HENRY NEWBOLT: Poetry is the expression in speech, more or less rhythmical, of the aesthetic activity of the human spirit, the creative activity by which the world is presented to our consciousness. But this is not enough: it gives us only Poetry in the abstract, and makes no distinction between good and bad, greater and lesser poetry. The two necessary further stages are these: good poetry is not merely the expression of our intuitions, it is the masterly expression of rare, complex and difficult states of consciousness: and great poetry, the poetry which has power to stir many men and stir them deeply, is the expression of our consciousness of this world, tinged with man's universal longing for a world more perfect, nearer to the heart's desire. By definition, and in a plain, prosaic way, we are all poets, all makers of our own world: but the great poets re-make it for us; they take this very world of time in which we live, and by an incantation they rebuild it for us, so that for an

[1]From John G. Neihardt's *Poetic Values*. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

instant we see it under a light that is not the light of Time.—From *A New Study of English Poetry*.

POE: I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as "the rhythmical creation of beauty."

. . . . .

Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music, without the idea, is simply music; the idea, without the music, is prose, from its very definitiveness.

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE: I have none [definition of poetry], nor have I one of immortality, or eternity, or the love of God. Poetry defies definition. When one defines it, he loses it.

EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON: Poetry is a language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said. All poetry, great or small, does this. And it seems to me that poetry has two outstanding characteristics. One is that it is, after all, undefinable. The other is that it is eventually unmistakable.

RUSKIN: Poetry is "the presentment, in musical form, to the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions."

CARL SANDBURG: Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable.

. . . . .

Poetry is the harnessing of the paradox of earth cradling life and then entombing it.

Poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during a moment.

Poetry is a fresh morning spider-web telling a story of moonlit hours of weaving and waiting during a night.

. . . . .

Poetry is the capture of a picture, a song, or a flair, in a deliberate prism of words.[1]

LEW SARETT: Poets are people of such fine sensibilities and perceptions that in the contemplation of life they discover beauties, significances, and implications that are not apparent to most men. Poems are records of these moments of uncommon insight; they are endeavors to capture the fleeting loveliness of life, its rich implications, its noble emotions, its melodies, and its beauties caught in a flashing instant. Obviously it is difficult to define this record of nuances and subtle reverberations.

Poets differ, moreover, concerning the essential elements of poetry. Some poets emphasize the factor of beauty—Poe, for example, Coleridge, and Swinburne. Others declare that poetry should contain not only beauty but also an idea, thought-content, and significance. Certain writers feel that

[1]From Carl Sandburg's *Good Morning, America.* Published by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

the idea should be stated more or less explicitly—Pope, for example, and Longfellow; and there are those who feel that the idea need be merely intimated—Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Francis Thompson, and Blake. Still others hold that a poem need not "say" anything; it need only communicate a feeling. Some stress the element of emotion; and some the element of melody. The best poetry, I think, is marked by fresh beauty, a fresh idea, melodic loveliness or aptness, and fine feeling in restraint. This combination of poetic factors explains the enduring and undeniable splendor of Burns's *To a Mouse*, of Wordsworth's *The World Is too Much with Us*, and of Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

Poets are unanimous, however, in declaring that one most important ingredient of poetry is fresh beauty. Of course, "beauty" is so ambiguous, so relative in meaning, so varied in its aspects, that it too defies definition. Nevertheless, we know it when we see it.

SHAIRP: Poetry is the expression in beautiful form and melodious language of the best thoughts and noblest emotions which the spectacle of life awakens in the finest souls.

SHAKESPEARE:

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.

SHELLEY: A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth.

. . . . .

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.

. . . . .

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aërial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!

SIDNEY: Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word μίμησις, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end,—to teach and delight.

. . . . .

Indeed the greatest part of poets have appareled their poetical inventions in that numberous kind of

writing which is called verse. Indeed but appareled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry, since there have been many most excellent poets that never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets. . . . Which I speak to show that it is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet—no more than a long gown maketh an advocate, who, though he pleaded in armor, should be an advocate and no soldier—but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by.

SPENCER: Poetry is idealized emotion expressed in the language of emotion.

EUNICE TIETJENS: Certainly I have no real definition. But I can say that to me the two chief characteristics of poetry are condensation and the heightened mood, the condensation which will not allow an unnecessary syllable, and the heightened mood which must make every syllable sing or slash. If you add to this the unexplainable and totally mysterious quality of magic, you will have the recipe as I see it.

RIDGELY TORRENCE: I can give you no definition of poetry. Attempts to define it may result in interesting phrases or epigrams such as Wordsworth's impli-

cation that it is emotion remembered in tranquillity but the divinity can no more be defined than can any other ray of the infinite.

. . . Every true poem must spring from profound sincerity and deep emotion. A true poem cannot be made without intense heat. As to form it will rise with the inspiration if the latter is true. If the flower is a flower at all it will unfold unerringly into its inevitable form.

To tell you briefly how I know a poem when I see one would be impossible. It must pierce, surprise, warm, and delight me. It must give me a mortal wound and heal me, break me and make me whole again in a new world.

I doubt whether I have any practical suggestions to a student who is beginning a study of poetry. If the student is sensitive to poetry he will have to find his own way by eager reading though of course a teacher who is truly sensitive and appreciative can be of vast assistance in saving him time and many confusions.

WATTS-DUNTON: Poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language.

JOHN HALL WHEELOCK: There is hardly a definition of poetry that does not also include prose of a certain kind, probably because the distinction between poetry and prose is one of spirit rather than of form,

and the difference in spirit is unmistakable but undefinable also. However, here is my definition:

Poetry is the indirect communication, by means of word-, rhythm-, and sound-patterns, of something that cannot be said. This something may be defined as a vision of reality or the complex of ideas, emotions, and sensations produced in a self through its experience of reality.

What to my mind most clearly distinguishes a true poem is that the thing it communicates cannot be communicated in any other way than by the exact words and rhythms used in the poem. To put it differently, prose can be paraphrased and the substance remains; but a true poem cannot be paraphrased any more than it can be translated. In the true poem substance and form are identical.

WORDSWORTH: Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.

. . . . .

Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.

. . . . .

Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man.

. . . . .

What is a poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them.

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COLERIDGE: *Biographia Literaria*

LANIER: *The Science of English Verse*
POE: "The Rationale of Verse," "The Philosophy of Composition," and "The Poetic Principle"
SHELLEY: "A Defense of Poetry"
SIDNEY: "The Defense of Poesy"
WORDSWORTH: "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*"

These seven anthologies, among the better and well-known, should be familiar to every student:

The Oxford Book of English Verse
The Oxford Book of American Verse
The Oxford Book of Ballads
The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse
EDWIN MARKHAM: *The Book of Poetry*
PALGRAVE'S *Golden Treasury*
MARK VAN DOREN: *An Anthology of World Poetry*

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